



Richard Jones

Manled d.

Aug 09.





Photogravure by Annan & Sons, from a photograph by Lafayette.

Your well-wisher E. Herbert Evans

The Life of E. Herber
Evans, D.D. From his
Letters, Journals, etc. By the Rev.
H. Elvet Lewis ❧ ❧

LONDON : HODDER AND
STOUGHTON ❧ ❧ 27
PATERNOSTER ROW : MCM

PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO. LTD., NEW-STREET SQUARE
LONDON

PREFACE

IT may be well to explain the nature of the materials available for this biography.

The autobiographical notes of his early years (1836-57) were written in Welsh; and so, of course, were the 'Monthly Notes' in the denominational periodical—*Y Dysgedydd*—which he edited (1874-96). Most of his letters were written in English; and so also the 'Perennial Diary,' which contains a few retrospective notes, but was mostly filled in when the event was fresh (1889-96). In this diary the different years come serially under the one date: for instance, under January 1 there are entries for 1889, 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895. The first entry for 1896 is under January 2, as will be found in the course of the work.

The Rev. D. S. Jones, Welsh biographer of 'Williams of Wern,' was asked, in the first instance, to write Dr. Evans's Welsh biography. He had

begun collecting materials when death took him. He would have done his work with pious care and a hero-worshipper's zeal.

We are personally indebted to those whose names appear in connection with quotations, or with letters they had kindly lent : especially to the Revs. L. Williams, Bontnewydd ; W. Pierce, West Hampstead ; Dr. Owen Evans, London ; J. Machreth Rees, Chelsea ; Mr. Hugh Williams, Bangor. From his brother, Rev. W. Justin Evans, Lewis- ham, and his daughter, Mrs. O. L. Roberts, Liverpool, we have received constant help. It only remains to add that this biography could never have been written but for the way in which his widow had arranged the materials for it. She has, by her labour of love, saved the writer untold trouble.

The monument over his grave is the gift of Salem Church. A memorial fund is also being raised to establish a scholarship at the Theological College, Bangor, for which he sacrificed so much.

H. ELVET LEWIS.

December 1900.

CONTENTS

PART I

PREPARATORY YEARS

(1836-1862)

So His divine and loving Dove

* * * * *

*Before the slow scene can unveil,
In new compassions breaks, like light,
And morning-looks.*

CHAP.	PAGE
I. IN THE HOLLOW, AND ON THE HILL	3
II. SCHOOL AND CHAPEL	23
III. MANY ROADS—ONE WAY	33
IV. FIRST SERMONS AND EARLY PULPIT APPEARANCES	54
V. BRECON COLLEGE (1858-1862)	67

PART II

FIRST PERIOD OF MINISTRY

(1865-1879)

'I will darken the earth on a clear day'

CHAP.	PAGE
I. LIBANUS, MORRISTON	87
II. SALEM, CARNARVON (1865-1871)	100
III. THE PUBLIC PLATFORM	111
IV. THE 'BIG MEETING' AND THE <i>CYMANFA</i>	124
V. A WIFE'S DIARY	139
VI. 'JENNY'	147
VII. THE ANCHORAGE TESTED	159
VIII. CHURCH AND HOME: CLOUD AND SUN	171
IX. OVERDRIVEN	179

PART III

DARKENED NOON

(1880-1884)

'A great cloud . . . and a brightness was about it'

I. 'WHEN I WAS STRICKEN DOWN'	195
II. THE WAVE	204
III. 'THE CLOUDS RETURN AFTER THE RAIN'	217

CONTENTS

vii

CHAP.	PAGE
IV. A CLEARING OUTLOOK	224
V. THE <i>DYSGEDYDD</i>	240

PART IV

CLOSING YEARS

(1885-1896)

'It shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light'

I. 'STARTING LIFE ANEW'	257
II. 1892: 'THE GREAT YEAR'	274
III. TERM OF PRINCIPALSHIP	296
IV. READER OF BOOKS AND LOVER OF NATURE	310
V. 'A COVERT FROM STORM AND FROM RAIN'	322
VI. THE SPIRIT'S ENRICHING	333
VII. THE GREATEST YEAR	347

PART I
PREPARATORY YEARS
(1836-1862)

So His divine and loving Dove

* * *

Before the slow scene can unveil,
In new compassions breaks, like light,
And morning-looks

CHAPTER I

IN THE HOLLOW, AND ON THE HILL

THIS is to be the biography of a Preacher. Whatever else he might have wished to be, whatever else have failed to be, he wished and did not fail to be a preacher. It was the desire hidden in his heart, it was the evident endeavour of his whole life. Whatever memory of him may remain after many days, it is the tradition of the eloquent Preacher that will comfort the old and inspire the young.

Evan Evans¹ was born July 5, 1836, at Pant yr Onen, near Newcastle Emlyn—a small market town, of, at that time, a little over 800 inhabitants, partly in Carmarthenshire and partly in Cardiganshire. It is prettily situated in one of the most picturesque parts of the Vale of Tivy: its castle stands on the height of what may be called a small peninsula, formed by a double bend in the river. Dinas Emlyn, it will be remembered, is used by Sir Walter Scott with more poetic felicity than

¹ 'Herber' was inserted in his name in 1873, after he had settled at Carnarvon, to distinguish him from another minister in the town of the same name. In this he followed a bardic custom.

geographical accuracy, as the abode of 'The Dying Bard,' who on his death-bed demanded his harp to play an air for his funeral :—

Dinas Emlinn, lament ! for the moment is nigh,
When sunk in the woodlands thine echoes shall die ;
No more by sweet Teivi Cadwallon shall rave,
And mix his wild notes with the wild dashing wave.

The house in which he was born stands by the roadside, some little way out of the town, on the Carmarthenshire side of the river, and within sound of it—at least on a night of flood. The house is in a hollow, as its name of 'Hollow of the Ash' suggests : it is well sheltered on one side by the wooded slope of Voelallt ; and beneath it flows a mountain stream—the Arad—a tributary of the Tivy. It is something for a child to be brought up between the lightsome sound of running water and the deeper tones of a well-grown wood.

The old house is gone ; it was burnt down some years ago ; but the roughly paved hearth is still shown. Visiting the spot in his latter years he wrote in his note-book : 'I have recently seen the place where a board used to be placed across the doorway to hinder me from crossing the threshold into danger. Man, from infancy, is prone to rush into danger—and his way must be shut in from first to last.'

His father, Josiah Evans, was a blacksmith, far more skilled than the average. He gained for himself considerable local fame as a maker of ploughs. 'He invented,' says his son, 'a new form of casting for the plough; and had he had the Englishman's enterprise he would have patented it and made his fortune; but being a Welshman he was content to make a comfortable living by working hard.' These ploughs came to be spoken of far afield; some of them even found their way to America and Australia and other lands beyond the sea.

His mother's maiden name was Sarah James. Her parents lived at Cenarth, another small town on the Tivy, between Newcastle and the sea. Her father was a gardener, 'and he had,' says his grandson, 'a big garden near his house full of apples. That was to me a great day when I was allowed to go and see my grandmother at Cenarth. I had as many apples, pears, and other fruit as I wished—and tea as well, that had enough sugar in it to make pretty good syrup! Those were famous days: I knew nothing of indigestion nor of pain after eating anything whatever.' His mother, as a child, attended the parish church at Cenarth, with her parents, but from an early date she began to attend the Independent Chapel at Drewen—one of the historic spots of Welsh

Independency. The minister at the time was Rev. John Phillips, son of a famous father, Dr. Phillips, Neuaddlwyd. He had been ordained there in 1828, and his father had at the time said to the church: 'When you get tired of him send him back to his mother; she thinks a great deal of him, whatever your opinion of him may be.' But no need arose to send him back to his mother; the church and the entire countryside came to 'think a great deal' of him, too. They came from far and near to hear him, and memories of the Communion Sundays at Drewen have not died out of the land; when the elements had to be taken out of the thronged chapel to those that stood on the green grass among the tombstones. There Sarah James was received, as a young girl, into church membership, and nothing could hinder her faithful attendance. She tasted the joy of religion there, and never lost it. She used to speak to the end with deep affection of the ministry of John Phillips. And her son, too, came in early childhood to be associated with Drewen. In the month of June, 1843, his mother took him to a *cymanfa*—a field-preaching meeting—that was being held there. One of the preachers preached from Rev. vii. 9, 10. 'I can this moment recall,' so the child-hearer came to write forty years later, 'his far-reaching voice, thrilled with melody,

contrasting the *cymanfa* at Drewen with the “great *cymanfa* of the Hill of Bliss.” The tone of his voice ringing that phrase over and over again remains in my ear through all the years, and it will henceforth remain until I meet him in the “great *cymanfa* of the Hill of Bliss.”’

Josiah Evans and Sarah James were married in Cenarth Parish Church, July 14, 1835. His father was a kindly, good-hearted man, ready to share with anyone in need, while she was a woman of strong common sense, keen to read both men and things. ‘My father and my mother were very different from each other,’ he tells us; ‘and for that reason, perhaps, lived pleasantly together, and loved each other greatly.’ Their dowry had consisted of ‘their two hands, their character, the furniture of a small house, and the tools of the smithy;’ and in reference to this matter he explains further :

My grandparents at Pen yr Herber and Cenarth were in comfortable circumstances ; but it was not customary to give anything to the children, beyond ‘starting them out’ by providing them with house-furniture and something of that kind. My mother showed me an old crown piece that she received from her father, with the instructions that she was not to spend that till she was in need of bread. And, thank God ! that crown piece is not yet spent. There is now no likelihood that it will be

spent for one other generation after her ; and I hope it will be handed down as an heirloom in the family for many an age, as a proof of the goodness and tender providence of our Heavenly Father.

Good health, hard work, and a provident mind helped them considerably, and they were able, from their own gains, to build a larger house. His father was a strong and a very healthy man ; but 'he toiled too hard in the early years of his married life, because he was very anxious to better his circumstances and provide for his children's education.'

Evan was their first-born ; he had two sisters and three brothers, all, except one sister, still living. When, in early years, partially convalescent from the scarlet fever, he made them let him go with his father to a ploughing match ; he had a relapse and it nearly proved fatal. He was for some time quite blind, and he could recollect his grandfather passing his hand, back and fore, in front of his face and asking, 'Can you see my hand now ? Can you see my finger before your eye, my boy ?'

We have already named the year 1843, as the date of his first great religious reminiscence ; but the years of a man's life are all mixed on earth—mixed of sunshine and storm, of May mornings and thundery June nights, the noise of the street and the psalm of the sanctuary. In the same year

in his history, he came to remember the great assembly in the Hill of Bliss, and the hapless, formless outbreak of the 'Rebecca Riots'—the outcome of grievances that were real enough ; but the thing itself was hopelessly mismanaged from the first, and became a mere fiasco—though not without its tragic incidents. He writes of it thus :

I remember the Riots well, and many strange incidents that left an indelible impression upon my mind. I remember we all waited up, in considerable terror, the night the Newcastle toll-gate was broken in pieces ; we could hear the sound of the noise and the shooting from our house. My father had been summoned to join 'Becca,' and he had refused ; and we knew how dangerous that was, and we were very frightened.

This opened to another scene that left no little impression upon my mind, namely, the first coming of soldiers into the district. A cavalry regiment, and another of infantry came to Newcastle to put down the riots ; and great was the interest I felt in them. They had their head-quarters in the Workhouse, close to my home ; and I remember they had opened some kind of play-house there, and the soldiers used to act—some would-be plays. My parents would have been terrified if they had thought it was a Theatre ; but they did not know there was any harm in the thing under a common name, and in a place like the Union poor-house. We were therefore allowed to go there and see them, more than once, with other children ; and the consequence

was that we as children started a similar play-house in a stable at Aberarad; and I remember I was one of the actors, girt with a sword, and full of zeal for the military play—illustrating once more the power of the imitative faculty in children.

About this time, or a little before, he began to attend school, kept by one William Williams. It was a 'noisy old-fashioned school,' with a considerable element of 'wicked boys.' There he had his first fight, and conquered, and was left alone. 'A boy at school,' he remarks, 'like a man in life, must win his place—through some victory or other, and there is not much peace to be had except what a battle has purchased. Brougham says that a child receives more impressions before he is six years old, than any other period of his life. And I received the beginning of my education in that old school-room; and I could easily draw a plan of it now—from the schoolmaster's desk, down to the lowest form: it all remains.'

He was afterwards sent to a grammar school kept by a Unitarian minister—'Davies of Llanybri:' a good scholar, and he had in his school many a 'lad of parts' in the district. The removal of the family, March 25, 1847, to a village some three miles distant, brought to a close his career at a grammar school.

During those early years he spent much of



PENYRHERBER FARMHOUSE WHERE DR. HERBER EVANS SPENT HIS CHILDHOOD.

his time with his paternal grandparents. Their house, Pen yr Herber, also some three miles away, was on a hill-top. It was a change from the quiet hollow, the green meadows, and the shadow of trees on the banks of 'sweet Tivy,' to a somewhat bare height. It brought him near the heather and gorse, and into a wider world. Trees, and river-meadows, and mansions were not lost sight of as it was reached: the smooth slopes of Cardiganshire, and the more rugged sides of Frenni Fawr and Preselly Hills, were well seen; but the gorse was still nearer, as he came to know to his cost. Pen y Bool—a hillock near his grandfather's house—was fairly covered with it. He had often to turn the uneasy whin-bruise; 'and perhaps,' he writes in one of his reminiscent 'Monthly Notes,' 'it was the recollection of that which kept me, for years, from perceiving any poetry in their golden flowers, How a bitter experience in connection with anything deprives it of all poetry.' It was a saying of Ruskin, to the effect that his fondness for the epithet *golden* arose, not from his fondness for gold, but from his love for the gorse-flower—it was this saying that made him reconsider and revise his view of the blossom that

has a troop of swords

Drawn to defend it.

But even that hillock was not all gorse. 'Many a time I climbed it, to touch the many-coloured rainbow that shone upon it; but by the time I reached there, it had vanished; teaching me that, like everything in life truly poetic, it was to be viewed from afar, and not to be overtaken and held.' However, in spite of gorse to be bruised, and vanished rainbows, those were merry, happy times with his grandparents. He and 'Time were playmates,' and he was not afraid of the sand-glass and the scythe Time carries.

Jonah Evans, the grandfather, was a remarkable man. He kept a smithy and tilled a few acres of land. Quiet, diligent, honest as day: of him, and of his wife Hannah, the grandson could write glowingly and unhesitatingly that they belonged to the excellent ones of the earth: 'if they are not in heaven, it cannot be much filled with any better from this earth.' The grandfather was a deacon at Ebenezer Independent Church, Newcastle Emlyn, and so, as we have noted, he had a journey of three miles to make. But it is calculated that he did not miss twenty Sabbath or week-day services during the whole of his long life. Sometimes, towards evening, in the smithy, in the midst of busy toil, he would be suddenly missed; inquiries would be made for him; but when it was remembered it was 'meeting-night'

at Ebenezer, no one troubled to inquire further. And his household piety was as definite, as consistent, as his chapel-going.

The large Peter Williams Bible was on the table every morning as sure as the rising of the sun, and again in the evening, as sure as its setting. Everyone throughout the district knew it was no use expecting Jonah Evans to neglect the 'duty ;'¹ and, whatever the hurry might be in the midst of harvest activities, he would never abbreviate it, nor omit it once in a whole lifetime. His consistency left a deep impression on my mind ; and many a time have I in memory seen him kneeling in the 'meal-room,'² like an old Puritan, or, as he was called by the neighbours, 'the prophet Jonah'—faithful to his God before everyone. There I obtained a high sense of the value of the Family Service, as it was kept by the best of the pious fathers of Wales. This altar has fallen, in these days, in hundreds of families in our land ; and like that ancient altar on Carmel, the stones have been scattered, causing many to back-slide and go after their idols.

What can be more valuable to a child than to be brought up in a country home, where the purest rites of the simple religion of Jesus are dutifully observed ? The chapter, the hymn, and

¹ A literal translation of the Welsh for 'Family Prayers.'

² In the more old-fashioned Welsh farm-house, this is a room into which, perhaps, parlour and kitchen open, and in it members of the family used to join the servants for meals.

the prayers are inwoven with fields, and trees, and sunlit clouds. I myself remember, as a child, brought up some seven miles from that other house above the Vale of Tivy—in a later generation, but among the same pious customs—how, in learning hymns and verses, each came to be located, in a field, or on a slope, or on the hill-top ; so that, in fancy, the hymn was exchanged for the daisied green, and the meadow, in turn, flowered into a hymn.

Another institution—still kept up—was the pilgrim prayer meeting. As there are long distances often to go to the chapel, a week-night prayer meeting is held, in circuit from house to house ; and occasionally, on a Sunday evening, a sermon is given in one of the largest outlying farmhouses, instead of in the chapel. We have, again, his own descriptive words :

I remember several remarkable ones at Pen yr Herber. The night of the meeting was a special one—the house and the close underwent a thorough cleaning. The large kitchen was filled with forms for those who would come, and from the spacious, well-furnished grate glowed a cheerful heat. As a rule I was permitted to sit on the wide *pentan*. It was a rustic gathering, and therefore very interesting. Several original characters attended. ‘Homespun’ material was the dress of men and women, and homespun as well were their prayers and experiences. All their opinion like their

clothes, were home-made. Many dogs from the neighbouring farms also attended ; but they were as devotional as the dogs Landseer painted in kirk. The dogs were exactly as their owners. Sometimes an ill-bred dog would come in, and snarl very discourteously at a brother dog near him ; but everyone knew him for some heathen's dog, and that he was not a regular attendant of these meetings ; and he would be unceremoniously turned out of doors. I knew the principal praying men among both denominations, Methodist and Independent, wont to frequent these meetings : and great used to be my joy when I saw that my favourite ones had arrived. One man of uncommon gifts, belonging to the Methodists, would be invariably called, if present, to close the meeting. They were excellent meetings. They helped to cultivate the talent of prayer in the country, and the people were great 'scripturers,' all men of 'one book,'—strong in the Scriptures, with very little knowledge of commentaries : all was homespun ; and therefore there was plenty of originality.

To the east of his grandfather's house, but some two or three miles distant, there was another Independent Chapel—Capel Iwan. In connection with it, a little infants' Sunday school was held in the 'meal-room' of a farm-house called Hendy, in the hollow beneath Pen yr Herber. Here he used to come on Sunday afternoons, during his long and frequent stays with his grandparents. The minister, during a portion of those years, at Capel

Iwan, was the Rev. William Jenkins, a preacher of more than ordinary power, and one to whom Dr. Evans owed much, from early childhood.

Once, while staying at my parents' house, he raised me on to his knee, and, when no one was hearing, asked me in an affectionate, winning way, 'Wouldn't you like to love Jesus Christ, my boy?' I remember no more of the conversation; but it started in me some thoughts that would not let me alone until I came to give myself to the Saviour. He, afterwards, was my favourite preacher. My mother used sometimes to call me to account for sleeping in chapel, but my ready defence was 'I never sleep when Mr. Jenkins *Bach* preaches.'

Mr. Jenkins had in him, especially during those years, much of the earnest revivalist. He was known to spend nights in prayer, and days in communion with God; 'so that on Sundays people used to think his face shone, as the face of Moses coming from the Mount.'

When Evan was now about twelve years old, his favourite preacher was announced to preach on a Sunday evening at his grandfather's house. It was a remarkable service—a service that made history, especially in the case of that boy of twelve. Some thirty-five years after, this is how he wrote of it:

Half an hour before the time there came too many people for any house in all those parts to hold them;

and so my grandfather's old armchair was taken out to the adjoining field, as a pulpit, for the people to throng around it. It had been a delightful Sabbath afternoon : if one had been ordered from the weather-office for such a service, it could not have been more desirable. I remember how I spent about an hour on a hedge-top in front of the house, watching the people coming. The roads and paths were black with wayfarers. The sheep that grazed on the sides of Pen y Bool looked surprised at the crowds of people in such a lonely partt. The cows, recently milked, lifted up their heads, and seemed to cast inquiring looks—what can the matter be ? Here, a man climbing the hedge ; there, a man coming over the stile They come singing from the direction of Capel Iwan. And now, Mr. Jenkins stands up in the arm-chair, and gives out a hymn :

Life of the dead, be with us, Thou !
Breathe thro' Thy Spirit on us now.

The singing is full of the *hwyl* of rural singing, and such a crowd in such a place moves everyone, and makes them put a prayer into the words. It was a time of saving in the land, ' the Lord was near ; ' and there were many fathers and mothers praying—' Life of the dead, be with us, Thou ! '—mingled with a prayer for some John or William, like Abraham of old—' O that Ishmael might live before Thee ! ' The preacher read Psalm viii. They sang again, but I do not remember what hymn. ' He prayeth,' and at once connects heaven and earth. How easy to pray, when there is a prayer already in every bosom ! And he also who prays believes in

prayer, and is convinced that it is Heaven, the Power from on High, that alone can make that service to be remembered for ever. We could think, by the sound of responsive *Amens*, that every Aaron and Hur, from all that countryside, had met together that evening. Before the prayer was ended, that field had been consecrated to many, so that they were ready to say with Jacob, 'This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven !' Having sung again, Mr. Jenkins took for his text Psalm viii. 4—'What is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that Thou visitest him?'

Then follows a good summary of the sermon ; and if, as is probable, the whole was transcribed from a boy's memory, it is of itself sufficient to prove the remarkable grasp of that memory. It was altogether an extraordinary service ; made so perhaps, partly, by the very unexpectedness of it. The preacher's melodious voice could be heard at times by some who were more than a mile away. At the close they sang a well-known Welsh hymn, which may be given thus—as far as it can be translated :

'Tis time for Babel's captives
To sing—This is the day !
The iron bars are sundered,
Our God hath made a way :
Now shall the harps long silent,
Awake each tuneful string ;
A gladder song than ever
To Jesus shall they sing.

The last four lines became a refrain—repeated time after time. Then the hush of evening, that had already taken the surrounding hills, fell on the throng as it slowly, silently, wended its various ways homeward, from its new found Bethel.

There is a profound awesomeness about the mighty, the unexpected influences, men, without knowing it, bring sometimes to bear on other human lives. How little did Jonah Evans guess, that summer Sabbath evening, that he had, in welcoming God's evangelist, so richly endowed his grandchild! But the pious hearth has many great rewards that are never secured by mere church piety.

Thinking of that service and of the young preacher and younger hearer, there comes to my mind and memory another service; and the two of them were present in that also. But the twelve-year-old hearer was by this time the most eloquent preacher of his country, invited to the re-opening services of a new chapel, some seven miles away—October 25-6, 1875. I had, as a schoolboy, been permitted to attend the services. The first evening he preached from Hos. x. 12—'Break up your fallow ground.' My recollection of that service and the sermon is faint and confused. Next morning he preached from Deut. xxxii. 31—

‘Their rock is not as our Rock’; and that day I heard the man known throughout Wales as ‘Evans, Carnarvon.’ Before he had spoken five minutes he had won the audience to smile—to laugh even; he had brought us back again until the very breathing some hushed; then he had touched another chord, and one could hear the half suppressed cough of a hale, hearty farmer—the last effort before surrendering himself to the joy of tears. Long before he was half-way through the sermon he could do as he liked with the congregation. All emotions seemed to be equated; tears were as happy as smiles, smiles as deep as tears. I remember now, vividly, that one thing only marred my perfect enjoyment—I was afraid he would have to finish, some time! And so it came to pass. The second preacher for the service was William Jenkins—the divine herald of that summer evening some twenty-seven years previously. Perhaps his youth and his freshness had somewhat declined; but more likely it was the sheer impossibility of doing anything ordinary after so extraordinary an effort. At any rate, he was prudent enough not to attempt a sermon; he spoke briefly on—‘How long halt ye between two opinions?’ and then prayed. None of us knew that day what the debt of the first preacher was to the second. To us the first was everything: to-day

we know we could not have had the first, as he was, without the second, and the service in the field beside Pen yr Herber. It was Herber we saw crowned; afterwards we came to know that the other, too, was crowned in the sight of Him who crowns His new kings without uncrowning the old. Mr. Evans preached again in the afternoon on 'The Joy of Christian Work' (Nehem. xii. 43),¹ and it was the morning experience intensified, amplified. It returns again—the rapturous thrill of the refrain—'*hyd yn mhell!*' 'even afar off.' In describing the outgoings of sacrifice he singled out the names of Abraham, of Lincoln, of Florence Nightingale, till he reached this:—

I cannot tell the names of those born in Bethlehem, or of those brought up at Nazareth, eighteen centuries ago, but I can name One to you—Jesus—Who offered Himself as a sacrifice,—the only willing sacrifice this world has ever known. Every little bird tried to get out of the hand of the sacrificers; even the lamb tried to get from under the knife: but this was a willing sacrifice at last. He who ascended Calvary for us 'gave Himself' to the bitter death of the cross, in order to give us joy everlasting; and I can hear the joy from that sacrifice going up through the ages.²

¹ This will be found in his volume of English sermons, *True and False Aims and other Sermons*, pp. 241-258.

² *Ibid.* pp. 256-7.

We have run before the years, so that at the very outset the Preacher may come into view. But how the boyish hearer of twelve, in the field at Pen yr Herber that summer evening, came to be one of the most eloquent preachers of his country and his age must be told more in detail. For he, too, was the child, not of one, but of many influences ; and he, also, like others, had his ' walking in the wilderness ' before he came in sight of his Promised Land.

CHAPTER II

SCHOOL AND CHAPEL

HIS grandfather's house on the hilly height stands between the first home of his parents and their second and final home at Pontselly. They removed to their new home not without misgiving ; but as Dr. Evans has himself, in some autobiographical notes, related the circumstances and given a candid estimate of their influence, we will simply translate his remarks :—

On account of the excellence of my father as a mechanic, he was persuaded by Squire Lewis, Clynvieu (Colonel Lewis afterwards), to remove to Pontselly. The great disadvantage in connection with the removal was that it was necessary to keep an inn along with holding the smithy ; and my parents were strongly opposed to that. But the 'Nag's Head' was the only inn on the Clynvieu estate, where the justices sat bi-monthly to decide the fate of the malefactors of the neighbourhood ; and this inn had to be kept on. Clynvieu mansion was being built about the time that we removed there ; and for that reason there were many strangers in

the district, who called to drink and chat of evenings. Many a time I remember my mother leaving the house, escaping out of the way and the noise, and giving the servant charge of the drinkers. The effect of taking the public-house was to destroy, almost entirely, the habit of sitting down to drink ; and before long it came to be a quiet house, where no one was ever seen drunk. It brought to my mind the saying of Dr. Taylor of New York about his grandfather : ‘ Instead of letting the inn kill his piety, he killed the inn.’ So my parents reduced the returns of the ‘ Nag’s Head,’ that it was not worth while to keep it on ; and they would have been glad to be permitted to close the door and take down the sign.

I believe that a public-house, however well regulated, is a poor place for a home. My parents did their best, but a smaller house would have been much better, with the right to shut the door against strangers.

But in spite of all disadvantages we, the children, found in it a good home ; and not one of us has contracted a taste for intoxicating drinks. This old neighbourhood is dear to us because of the recollections of boyhood ; and we are pleased, all through life, to revisit Pontselly, as our quiet harbour in every storm.

This sequestered little village lies in the Vale of Cuch—a classic vale ; for it appears in the ancient Welsh *Mabinogi* as the chace of Pwyll, prince of the Underworld, where he came, in ‘ the youth of the day,’ and ‘ let loose his dogs beneath the wood.’ Another generation of trees to-day

holds the Vale of Cuch, and more romantic than all the charmed trees of legend is one broad-branched oak in the meadow of Pontselly, close to the river's brink, and overshadowing its current. Many and many a time, in the course of his life, Dr. Evans crossed the little meadow to this tranquil hermitage to train himself for preaching, while the birds sang above him, and the river slowly murmured beneath him.

He was now some eleven years old, and the question of education was urgent. But at that time country schools were few and poorly provided often, in every sense. His first experience was as unsatisfactory as well could be; the school was held in a barn, and the teaching was without method or helpfulness. But happily he soon found one of the world's born teachers at the British School in Llechryd. Wesleyan Methodism is almost unknown in these parts, but Mr. Edward Hughes was a Wesleyan, and occasionally took his place in the pulpit like his father. He was a man that 'understood his work, and knew how to draw forth the best in every child.' He used to hold examinations in his school, and place the names of the best, according to merit, on the school-room walls, here and there, visible to all, to stimulate others to excel. When the boys quarrelled or behaved rudely to each other he used to gather

the offenders around him and kneel in the midst of them to pray. They feared his prayers more than the rod. He had appointed a kind of order of deacons among the bigger boys; it was their duty to see that the younger boys had fair play in coming and going to school and at noon-time play. 'I am under deep obligations to him,' said his greatest scholar.

I walked three miles, there and back, regularly for four years, and I have in my library now the first book I received as prize—for English Composition—by Miss Webley Parry, dated March 1, 1850. I am proud of this book, when I have hundreds of volumes far more valuable. It was in this school I learnt most, and came to have a taste for learning and knowledge. I was allowed to remain there till I was as good a scholar, and as good a hand at 'rounders,' as any in school.

One morning, as he went to school, he fell into the river Tivy. He had to spend a good part of the day in bed, in the cottage of a kindly old woman, while his clothes were being dried. A small kindness was never small to him. He had a remembering grace. While she lived he never forgot her simple kindness; his annual present went to her as regularly as the summer came round.

Another such incident, from those years, lingered pleasantly in his memory. In one of

his later 'Monthly Notes' he writes of his going as a 'green youth' to Cilgerran Fair, with the sum of threepence in his pocket to spend. The pence soon disappeared, and he found himself, in the midst of attractions and eatables that grew continually more numerous and more tempting, a penniless looker-on.

But Mr. Thomas, Gelli Orlas, comes past, and hands me a sixpence—according to his usual kindness. And without any if or doubt, that was the sixpence that gave us the greatest enjoyment in our life. . . . But it is to this we want to come : that sixpence has been passed on to scores of boys since. We have given a sixpence to many of them, because we recalled the great joy that one gave us at Cilgerran. We publish this incident, which is in our memory since long ago . . . to show our readers how they may start forth kind deeds to the great markets of society. . . . That is the only enjoyment within reach of the aged and helpless—to start a kindness, one by one, on their journey through the ages, which shall meet them, with interest, in the great Judgment Day.

But however important to him at this period were his school experiences and his intercourse with neighbours, more important than all was the chapel. In these western counties of South Wales, Independency has taken deep root and has almost monopolised many districts. Such is the case between Newcastle Emlyn and Carmarthen.

The village chapel of Pontselly is called *Bryn Sion*, 'Zion's Hill,' and was then, and is still, well attended. It stands on the other side of the river from his parents' home, sheltered and half-hidden among trees. In 1847, the year of the family's removal, the Rev. Abednego Jenkins took pastoral charge of the church, in conjunction with another church, some six miles distant. This mode of pastoral grouping is not the exception, but the rule, in the country districts of Wales; and it has served well to secure a strong, healthy church-life. Mr. Jenkins had been ordained the previous year. He made up for lack of striking gifts as a preacher by his pastoral care of the prayer meeting and the Sunday School. He received some seventy new members at *Bryn Sion* during his first year. Dr. Evans was received later, and his 'Monthly Notes' help us again to give something more than the mere church minute. When Mr. Jenkins died in 1888 (during his later years he had joined and served the Calvinistic Methodists), Dr. Evans, piously mindful of every one that cheered and helped him at the start, wrote thus :

He was the minister that received the writer into God's Church. This is to him reason enough for writing a word here about him. He was not the first to lead him to think earnestly that it was necessary for him to

trust in a Saviour in order to be saved. But it was he, in an address at a prayer meeting in Bryn Sïon, one Sunday evening, that persuaded him to take the difficult step over the threshold into God's Church to the 'household of faith.' The death of our old minister brings that Sunday evening vividly to our mind. We were only some fourteen years old, and no boy could ever have been more harassed with the fear of joining the church. It was not customary there for the children to remain in the 'Societies,' and so we were filled with the awe of the 'Society.'¹ We believed that they would catechise us severely. And that evening there must have been something specially powerful to have so influenced us as to conquer fear and shame and force of habit. And we now bear witness that it was the wisest act we ever in our life had the privilege to do—namely, choosing Christ as the Guide of Life, and wearing the profession of that, before leaving our parents' home to face the world and its innumerable temptations. Mr. Jenkins was, in our eyes, a good and pure man, in word and deed. As a preacher he was uncouth, severe, and somewhat uninteresting. His addresses far excelled his sermons. We do not know how to account for it, but the 'prayer-meeting Sunday evening,' when Mr. Jenkins would give an address after two of the brethren had prayed, was to us a per-

¹ These are 'after meetings,' held, in the present instance, on Sunday evenings at the close of the usual service. Only church members, and those who may have decided to join the church, are supposed to remain. But now, more than then, the children also are encouraged to remain, and repeat either sermon texts or any other verse. New members were usually catechised by the minister or the deacons.

petual feast. And it was at the close of such a service that we found strength to decide the eternal question. Are not many of our congregations too much afraid of a Sunday evening prayer meeting? What church would be satisfied with a prayer meeting on a Sunday evening, if the minister were present? The writer believes that, now and again, such a service, with an address, would be less formal and more effective than a sermon.

He proceeds, in his remarks, to ledger his indebtedness to Mr. Jenkins for 'many an advice, and book, and letter'; and, characteristically, to express his regret that he had not made an opportunity to see his old friend in his last illness in order to thank him for those early kindnesses. 'Nothing now remains but to thank God for guiding Mr. Jenkins to Bryn Sïon; and when next we meet on the 'Hill of Zion' above, we will thank him too!'

God continually gives the privilege to some, comparatively or altogether unknown, to 'set forward,' at the journey's start, some of His bravest workers and most gifted messengers. They perform nothing wonderful—except as far as unchronicled fidelity in service that is often deemed insignificant, is at all times wonderful. The names of those who prayed, and taught children the love of God in Christ, at Capel Iwan and Bryn Sïon, more than fifty years ago, are already vanished or

vanishing :—the names, but not the influences ! And in the day that shall reveal the hidden story of time, the names shall again appear—names of fathers, mothers, teachers—yea, of servants and children. They have helped, in the gate of youth, those that have gone further than they.

But let the name of one of these minor brethren be rescued. His Sunday School teacher at Bryn Sion was a John Jones—colloquially known as ‘Jacky the Shoemaker.’ He was an ardent politician and a Christian in earnest. When he died, this is how his pupil wrote of him (Feb., 1880) :

It means a great deal to a young lad to feel certain that he knows one godly man, whatever of more. We felt certain that Jacky was to go to heaven, or else this earth might be as well without a heaven. We were in his class for years, and we came to know instinctively more than he of the geography of the Land of Canaan, and of historical questions : nevertheless, when the great subject of personal religion, of union with Jesus Christ, of regeneration and justification, came before us, Jacky understood these things through experience, and we sat as children at his feet, to listen. He understood the religion and the doctrines of the New Testament ; and it was a delight to listen to him repeating the sayings of old preachers long since laid to rest.

He was a man in whom the primary instincts were naturally strong, and he allowed them free

play to the end. He cherished a boy's love for his mother to the last : he loved the haunts of childhood with a pure passion : his memory of old far-off kindnesses assumed a form of piety. His diary, in his last years, seldom omits the first bird's nest of the season, the first coming of the swallow and the cuckoo.

So was it when my life began,
So is it now I am a man,
So be it when I shall grow old
Or let me die !

He himself has, in exquisite words, embalmed the memory of his early helpers, and their simple pieties :

Yes, there are old cottages renowned for the prayer meetings held within their walls. There are names of men and women—poor, but faithful to God and His cause—a little earth was sufficient to cover their remains out of sight, but there is not earth enough in Cader Idris and Snowdon to bury their names from the sweet remembrance of the land they blessed with their deeds and their prayers.¹

¹ Sermon on ' Making Known to the Children ' : p. 88.

CHAPTER III

MANY ROADS—ONE WAY

TO a young man, with a preacher in his soul, the period before finding a right of way to the pulpit is often extremely trying. Some wander about, bewildered themselves and bewildering others, bearing a sacred burden, and hiding it from the eye of the world. Nor did Dr. Evans pass this period unscathed. It is recorded of him that he once told his grandfather at Pen yr Herber that he would like to be a preacher if he knew he would come to be a '10 o'clock preacher on the *cymanfa* field!' the recognised highest point of a Welsh preacher's ambition. But his mother was from the first strongly opposed to his entertaining the idea ; and this may have, for a time, chilled his purpose.

Towards the close of 1850, he was apprenticed to Mr. J. M. Jones (*Ioan Cunllo*), Rhyd Lewis, Cardiganshire—some seven miles from home. It was a large country shop 'where everything that could be thought of was sold,' he tells us : 'from

treacle and blue, iron and rakes, pale codliver oil, silks and cloths, to the tall hats of Cardiganshire women.' There are reticent hints of disastrous days; one, when he let the treacle empty itself on to the floor, and another when the half-sack of flour fell into a box of eggs. His father had paid 20*l.* premium; he thinks it was too much for what he learnt, but not too much for what Mr. Jones endured! It was, altogether, the least satisfactory period of his life; and it would have been worse, but for the fact that Mr. Jones was a man of considerable literary attainments, a recognised poet; and that the shop was in consequence the rendezvous of all the 'characters' of the neighbourhood, during the long winter evenings especially. It was the parliament of the district: he could 'name the list of members; and they were not ordinary men: every one possessed some talent to earn the right of welcome; and they were as various as the clothes they wore, and as original as the cut of them!'¹ These fresh surroundings affected a part of his nature that had scarcely been touched before.

He became connected with the church at Hawen, and was fortunate in having for his Sunday-school teacher a man of talent and con-

¹ I have seen some numbers of a MS. magazine, written and published by this fraternity, for 1841.

siderable culture, one who knew how to bring young men to 'open their eyes' to the things of the Bible. 'I remember him at that time as if it were yesterday'—so wrote his old teacher, who survives him, at the time of his death—'his well-formed body ; his handsome, particularly cheerful face ; his broad, generous heart ; his innocence, and self-denial ; and also his hale, radiant look—so that *everyone*, through the whole neighbourhood, grew fond of him.'

It was in the chapel at Hawen, during the summer of 1852, that he had one of the unforgotten Sundays of his life. Early that year there had settled as minister of the church at Newcastle Emlyn, where his parents had at first been members, a preacher of unique gifts of eloquence—the Rev. John Williams. He was a bright, rapid speaker, with an unerring instinct for parables and illustrations that were at once homely and telling ; quick to transpose pathos into humour, and humour into pathos ; possessed of a voice that was, in itself, a speaker's fortune : while, intellectually, there appeared in him a vivid, though somewhat intermittent, gleam of genius. One feels, in attempting to describe the eloquence of John Williams, that Dr. Evans comes out also. And this is partly true. Those who heard both felt the kinship of both. It was not so much that

the captivated hearer of sixteen came to imitate the preacher heard for the first time that summer Sunday morning : rather was it, that through the older preacher the younger found himself. A small man, admiring a greater, becomes a mere imitator and loses himself ; but a great man, in admiring another, finds himself more. As usual, Dr. Evans fully acknowledged his indebtedness ; and the name of John Williams lovingly shone in many of his sermons and lectures.

Before he had finished his apprenticeship there, he had an attack of pleurisy which threatened to prove fatal. His mother came there to nurse him ; but she was anxious to have him brought home, believing he would not otherwise get better. So he was taken, on his bed as he was, in a covered cart. That journey of seven miles he never forgot. Acquaintances and relatives would meet the slow-moving conveyance here and there on the road, and ask the mother, how he was ; and he, out of sight, heard ‘ Poor fellow ! ’ quite as often as was comfortable.

Having finished the term of his apprenticeship, he obtained a situation in the spring of 1853, at Pontypridd, Glamorganshire. His brief experience there is related in the following autobiographical note—which shows also, once more, how sensitive he was, both to unkindness and kindness :

It was a very comfortable place, with enough to eat and enough to do, and small wages to begin. The Rev. Henry Oliver, B.A., was minister here at the time, young, in the prime of his power, and an excellent preacher. In this shop I met the first *bad* youth ; and he did his best to tempt me astray ; and I was afraid of his influence ; and I told my friend Mr. George Davies (from Newcastle Emlyn), who was at that time at Merthyr, that I would like to move ; and he found a place for me there. . . I do not know if this George Davies be alive, for he emigrated to Australia ; but if he ever should come within reach of any relative of mine, I wish them to know that I am indebted to him for much kindness when I was a green ignorant lad. ‘The Lord reward him that day !’ is my prayer.

His stay at Merthyr was brief and unhappy. His master was niggardly and mean, and took advantage of his being a young Welshman and a Christian : ‘and if I had not known better professors of religion than he, I would have been well on the way to become an infidel’—he writes. He had to go out when he could to buy food, to make up for the scanty provisions at table.

And yet these small annoyances, viewed in relation to life’s whole, seem to have had their use. They prepared him for his next bolder step. One week evening, in February, 1854, the ‘Rev. John Thomas, Glyn Neath’ was announced to lecture

in the Public Hall at Merthyr—known afterwards as Dr. John Thomas, Liverpool. The subject was ‘Employer and Employed ;’ and, in the course of his remarks, the lecturer dealt, in his own trenchant fashion, with hard, unfeeling masters. One hearer, at least, felt the pertinence of the remarks. Dr. Thomas was then in his thirty-third year, and on his way from South Wales to Liverpool, to undertake the pastorate of Tabernacle Welsh Church—and his life-work as denominational leader. At the close of the lecture the young shop-assistant ventured to speak to him : ‘ I told him that I too was about to start for Liverpool.’ And he adds afterwards : ‘ As we shook hands, two lives met, which influenced, for ever, the one the other.’

It is a far-reaching comment. Welsh Independence, in particular, came largely under the formative influence of those two for the next forty years. They were as unlike as well could be, in almost every respect ; and each needed the other, consequently. The good nature of the one required, at times, the energetic and unyielding determination of the other, to save it from feebleness : in turn, the decisiveness of the second required the generous, broad-hearted humanity of the first, to save it from hardness. We know there was hidden strength under all the genial blossoming of the one ; we know there were silent springs of tender-

ness beneath the almost forbidding resoluteness of the other ; each helped the other to find in himself a deeper clearer depth.

He reached Liverpool, March 31, 1854, having come by the steam-packet from Swansea—which was the cheapest, if not the quickest, mode of travelling. He did not advise his mother of his intentions, knowing her aversion to the large English towns. He landed in Liverpool with 5/- in his pocket, and no situation in view. A friend from Rhyd Lewis gave him a list of shops where he might call. ‘I remember well,’ he writes, ‘that I had a suit of clothes for the purpose: a dress coat—the only one I ever had—and the entire suit of black ; that was the orthodox suit for seeking a place.’ The first day passed, without hint of a place, and the second day, almost. He had decided not to write home till he had found something.

Towards the close of the second day he called at an establishment, where one of the partners was a Welshman ; and it was he whom he saw—unhappily, as his own words shall relate :

He did his best to persuade the writer, because he was a young Welshman, and ignorant, to bind himself to enter his service for six months, without one penny by way of wages. I remember his behaviour this moment . . . he sent a poisoned arrow to the heart of his young countryman, and it rankles still. I was in real need of a

kind hand at the time, and that is the help I received from Mr. —, the Welshman ! I told him I would tramp Liverpool for a year, and that I would come to him at the end of the twelve months, if I did not meet with some stranger of another nation to appreciate me better. It is said that the Scotch are famed for helping their fellow-countrymen when they have crossed the Border—as the history of Daniel McMillan proves. And that accounts for the fact that so many of their nation are so successful in every town and colony. The man I have referred to is an example of some Welshmen who are the very opposite of that—ready at any time to take advantage of a fellow-Welshman, and profit by his ignorance of his market-value. Later I fell in with many Welshmen of the right sort in Liverpool, some of the best and kindest men I ever knew.

The fourth day I found a place with Messrs. Ingham and Co., Scotland Road ; and I took a day's holiday before starting,—and what a happy day that was ! I cannot now recall where I spent it ; but it does not matter where !—every place was a paradise that day, because another goal in life had been reached. The ambition was commonplace enough ; but there was the same pleasure in reaching the goal then, as to-day in reaching something far higher. The shop-manager had promised me good wages, and he increased it by 5*l.* every three months for the first two years I was there, and that without my ever asking for an increase.

In this chapter two names have been suppressed : it is enough for ungenerous men to have

an anonymous immortality. If the names were given, *they* would be hated : let their *deeds* be hated, rather !

In some descriptive reminiscences of him during this period, Mr. Josiah Thomas (son of Dr. John Thomas) writes :

Evan Evans threw himself with all his energy into his work ; and I have the indisputable testimony of some of his shopmates that a more honest, more active, more conscientious young man never stood behind the counter of Messrs. Ingham and Morgan ; and it was a fact, acknowledged then, that he could sell more calico in a day than any two in the place. As the shop was in that part of the town where the Irish lived in several thousands, the majority of the customers was made up of the quondam inhabitants of the Green Isle ; and his full face, his quick movements, and the clear, musical voice of the young salesman made him exceptionally popular with a numerous class of the customers. But he was not only a good salesman ; he had, besides, considerable taste, with an eye for the beautiful ; because we are assured that he could dress a window more effectively than anyone else in the establishment.

And it may be inserted here that Dr. Thomas used at times with sly humour to praise his skill in 'dressing windows'—in other senses. At any rate, he was fairly on the way to become a successful tradesman, before he turned preacher.

He spent more than two years without having an opportunity to visit his home. But in August, 1856, he obtained permission to go ; and it came to be one of the great events of his life, in his own estimation, and to our view as well.

I shall never forget that holiday. I was in constant fear lest something should occur to hinder my having my holiday—one of the other youths might be taken ill, and then I would have to stay. I remember well, that it was after sitting in the carriage at Birkenhead that I felt for certain that I had started homewards. I had a very stylish new suit of clothes, a poor watch, and a yellow brass chain looking as if it were gold. The clothes were good, but the ornaments were very poor ! I had not, then, read Carlyle on ‘Shams.’ . . .

My father was over kind to me during that visit. There never was a father prouder of seeing his children succeed in the world. Indeed, it was his weakness, that he could not keep to himself the news of the success of any one of them.

.

On my return to Liverpool that time, I wrote the longest and smartest letter, giving the story of my journey, that I ever wrote. It is still extant, and it certainly helped to decide the future of its writer.

Yes, that letter is still extant—twelve pages folio of it—written on every inch of the page, in a small close hand. It is marked throughout by boyish

smartness—a preacher in the shadow looking over the tradesman's shoulder, and guiding the hand as it wrote. It has a short introduction, containing such a comprehensive comment as this: 'I have satisfied my own mind that self-interest and self-profit rule the world from pole to pole,'—and at the close of the introduction a sudden charge to his brother is inserted—'Now, Jim, go over it once before reading it aloud!' The subject of the letter is given as 'My Departure from Home,' and it is treated under three heads :—1. It was quite a necessary departure. 2. It was a departure much against the feeling. 3. It was a very important departure. The first part need not detain us, though in the midst of some trite general remarks there are effective dramatic bits ; but this translated quotation from its latter pages is sufficiently personal to be of permanent interest. Describing some of his emotions in leaving the house he remarks :

I have often thought that it was a somewhat severe punishment of Lot's wife to be turned into a pillar of salt because she looked back towards the old home, to see how her acquaintances fared under punishment. At any rate, if that dispensation had been in force that morning when I left, I know I should have been a pillar of salt before I was a hundred yards from the door ; and when I reached Yet Goch, I threw back a somewhat

anxious look on the objects of my youthful enjoyments. On the one hand was Bryn Sïon chapel, to which I walked many a time with my mother to worship ; and though it is small in size, and unadorned as compared with chapels in England, yet I found more pleasure in its services than in any other chapel ; and it is more to me than all the chapels and cathedrals of the world. On the other hand were Llechryd and Aber Cuch : places where I spent the pleasantest time of my life. . . . Beneath me the winding river silently rolls in its bed, with scarce a change for years. Many a time I bathed in it, unknown to my mother. Yonder is the meadow where I spent many an hour alone, in the silence of night, meditating. Near it is the little crystal well, many a cup of tea from whose clear waters have I drunk. And best of all, a little on one side, yonder is my dear old home, where undoubtedly I spent the happiest days on earth. I am glad to see anywhere a house with its walls washed in the same colour as it. (Some of it still sticks to my coat.) I am glad in summer to have as much as a red apple from my father's orchard ; I am glad to meet on the street anyone that knows my father's house. . . .

The paper of the letter is somewhat torn, the ink faded, by this ; but, looking at it, we cannot help feeling that we are looking at one of the scriptures of Providence. It was written by a young draper's assistant, but in writing it he was turning preacher.

The fateful letter was despatched : he tried to

settle down to his duties in the shop and in Tabernacle Chapel. He had made himself at home, from the first, among the people, and especially in the minister's house. When he was admitted, in the Society, as member of the church, one of the deacons, speaking in parable, said—'Sometimes when a family removes from one house to another, they will remark about some piece of old furniture: "Leave it there: it is not worth taking with us." I hope that is not the sort of religion you have.' The words clung to him all his days. The conditions of business life did not permit him, except rarely, to attend the week-night meetings, but he was in his place regularly on Sundays—missing only thrice in four years. And as for the minister's house, it came to be a 'home away from home' to him. Mrs. Thomas hailed, like himself, from Carmarthenshire; and being, besides, a kind, motherly woman, she became the confidante of all his troubles and plans. Time sped, many an evening, all too quickly for him in that house, conversing about 'books, preaching, and preachers'; so that he had often to run most of the way to reach his lodgings before eleven—the hour of locking the door. It was not unusual, after one of these nocturnal races, for him to come back next evening, bewailing his loss—'Botheration! I lost a draper's scissors last night again'

And here he was again, after the holiday, as warmly welcomed as ever in that home. A little later he took part in a debate at a Literary Meeting in Tabernacle, as to 'Whether man receives most good through his ear or through his eye?'—one of those questions that begin nowhere, and end there, but may, in the meantime, fetch a long compass, and call forth not a little keenness. 'In the discussion,' he says, 'I sided with the ear, and argued my best in favour of the ear. In the midst of my speech I forgot what came next and said—"My speech has escaped from my memory, but it cannot have escaped from my pocket : allow me to look at it." I looked, and put it back in my pocket quite self-possessedly. And it was this self-possession, as well as the speech itself, that convinced Dr. Thomas, who was present, that they ought to make a preacher of the youth.'

The Rev. Abednego Jenkins hinted as much in a letter to Dr. Thomas. Dr. Thomas was considerably slow in biassing the thought of any young man towards the ministry ; believing that no one should enter the ministry if he could stay out of it. Some years later, referring to Dr. Evans, he boasted—'He is the only one I have ever "raised" to be a preacher ; and I made up my mind that, in raising a preacher, I would raise the finest type only.' It had not, therefore, entered his

mind to induce the young draper to give up his employment, and enter the pulpit, till Mr. Jenkins's letter came, saying that every one at home had looked upon him, since he was a boy, as a prospective preacher; and that, had he remained at home, they would have already 'raised' him. It must be kept in mind, also, that his mother was all the time, and especially now, much against his leaving a good situation, and afterwards turn out a 'poor preacher'—as she put it. 'She did not explain to me whether she meant "poor" as a preacher, or "poor" in circumstances—probably both.' However, there were stronger forces than her fears, invisibly brought together, and ruled by an Unseen Hand. Dr. Thomas became the immediate agent of these forces, moved apparently by a letter and a speech; but these, too, were but the alphabetic signs of unseen things.

The procedure affords us a glimpse of how a young man is 'raised' to be a preacher, in Welsh Churches. Next Sunday he was asked—accidentally, as it were—to open the school.

I read the Ninth of John—well, and prayed—middling. After that the belief spread that I had in me the making of a preacher. The minister requested me to leave the Society, one particular Sunday evening, in order to place my case before the church; but I stayed as usual, and this was the means of postponing it for a few

Sundays. I was not at all ready to accede to the wish of the church at that time. I was full of hesitation as to the path of my duty. I had reached an honourable position in the establishment where I was—the highest possible for me then. I received £70 a year, with food and lodgings, and I was offered more if I would remain in their employment.

Fortunately—for him and for all—Providence was then represented at Tabernacle in its minister by a man who, when he once decided what was the right thing to do, would have it done :

So one Sunday evening at the commencement of the Society, the minister said that if Mr. Evans, Gildart Street, would not go out, his case would be put before the Church in his presence. This threat frightened me, and out I went. He put the case before them in his own way: 'It is said that he is an excellent shopman, and many believe he will make a preacher; let us put him to the test, and if he does not excel as a preacher, he can return to the shop again.'

When next I saw him, he said—'The Church has unanimously called you to preach the gospel, and I advise you to yield to the call. It is a call from God. Perhaps you will never, in the ministry, have as much money as you have to-day; but I have never been in want of half a crown, without getting it when it was needed. Try it, brother, and trust the same Providence; and I believe it will be well with you.' I remember the spot in Gildart Street, where the con-

versation took place. And it was to me one of the turning-points in life.

And so, one Sunday evening, he preached his trial sermon from Tabernacle pulpit. It was a pronounced success. The church did not hesitate to give him his credentials, nor did he much longer hesitate to take up his life-work. The following extracts from a letter written to him in this juncture, Feb. 3, 1857, while it pleasantly reintroduces the reacher of his boyhood, helps us to realise some of his and his parents' doubts—especially the fear of giving up what seemed a secure position for what might prove constantly uncertain. Mr. Jenkins takes up these points, and, among other things says :

In respect of my opinion of the step you have taken, I must confess that I am but a very incompetent adviser ; still the trust you have reposed in me, my previous regard for yourself and parents, as well as my ardent desire for your future welfare, and the good of that momentous cause in behalf of which you have been induced to consecrate your energies, influence my mind to offer a few suggestions. . . . If you had nothing to prevail upon your leaving your present calling, but to fortify yourself against its temptations, your resolution would be still praiseworthy—it is Christian like. If such conduct is misconstrued by worldly men and religious hypocrites, a good conscience commends it, your future well-being

commends it, your Heavenly Father commends it ; yea, He would commend your going to prison with Joseph rather than insult His majesty, and conform to the wiles of Satan, and to the maxims of worldly men, and thereby become a moral wreck. . . . Tell this to your parents, and they dare not blame you, but rather bow down and bless God that he has taken their beloved child from the snares that surround him, to do that which will please Him—glorify the Redeemer, and bless the world.

But, dear Evans, I know you have a higher motive in view than the evasion of temptations, in becoming an ambassador for Christ—the honour of His beloved name, and the salvation of many that lie in wickedness : this is an object worthy of an *angel* ; yea, worthy of the mission of the beloved Son of God. Therefore be courageous, and falter not. . . . Pray much that you may be imbued with the merciful spirit of Him who wept and bled, who groaned and died for a dying world. Oh, blessed God, infuse into our souls much of that heavenly fire which is essential to be good and faithful servants of Christ ! — In respect to your going to school—go immediately ; delay not ; your friends will supply you ; and if not (although I don't doubt it), God will open the way. Put your sole trust in God. . . . Remember private prayer : more depends upon that than all we do. I know you will do your best to read, study, and make as popular sermons as you possibly can ; but what are they worth without prayer ? A sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal ! If you desire to be a great and useful preacher—one that

will arouse the consciences of men, and win the smiles of Heaven upon his labours—pray much. Never aim at being popular, aim at being useful; beware also of pride, or self conceit. But private devotion will be the means of teaching you all these things far better than I am able to do it. Adieu. *Pray—pray—pray!*

Your affectionate friend,

WM. JENKINS.

So faithfully, so earnestly, was he advised, and we believe that we can unhesitatingly add—as faithfully, as devoutly did he follow the closing advice. He was greater in nothing than in prayer.

His stay in Liverpool meant much for him; among other things it helped to fit him for the position he was to take in English pulpits and English religious life. But it meant so much, because he remained loyal to his conscience and his chapel. The following letter, written, fifteen years after he had left Liverpool, to a young man who had just left Carnarvon for the same city,¹ best closes this chapter of his history.

August 9, '72.

My Dear Brother, —I enclose your church letter, and I am very glad that you intend now to join the church of Christ there. I remember the day well when I entered Liverpool without a single friend in the town; but the Lord

¹ Mr. W. G. Thomas, a son of one of the deacons of Salem Church, himself now the junior deacon of the same church.

helped me and kept me so that I can look back upon those four years as the best in my religious life. I have always found it more difficult for young men to live a good, sober religious life in small towns, than in large ones ; because they are apt to think that there is nothing to fear in small quiet towns ; and because they can see if they once yield in large cities, they must go headlong to ruin. Believe me, it is quite possible to live a clean, sober, religious life everywhere if we watch and pray.

Take an interest in good things, and that will keep you from bad ways and bad company. It was the interest I felt in chapel and *good books* that kept me without once darkening the door of a gin-palace or a public house while in Liverpool. You have been advised against such places : believe me, not too much, nor too strongly. Once a young man commences to visit such places with pleasure, he is doomed. What you will have to watch against most is bad companions, light-hearted young men who will do all they can to entice you to seek pleasure, and a pleasant out, &c. Be on your guard, my dear Willie : break every connection with a young man if he despises or speaks scoffingly of religion, the Bible, and religious services. Keep up your interest in every good work, and keep up your belief in good men, good books, good works, and a good Saviour. Don't let your spirit become sceptical or sour, and you will not do so while doing and working for Jesus. The safest way to keep from all bad things is to do all you can with good things. Keep the heart full, and there will be no room or temptati on. . . .

On leaving Liverpool, he was presented with a writing-desk by the Sunday School, whose Secretary he had been for two years. The inscription on it is thus worded: 'Presented to Mr. E. Evans by his young friends of the Tabernacle, as a testimony of their Christian regard for him, on his departure for college. Liverpool, August 3, 1857.' The 'college' he departed for was the Normal College, Swansea, under the principalship of Dr. E. Davies. It was at the time a favourite preparatory institution for young men about to seek admission to a Theological College.

CHAPTER IV

FIRST SERMONS AND EARLY PULPIT APPEARANCES

THE text of his first sermon was MAT. xxi. 37—
'But last of all He sent unto them His Son, saying,
They will reverence My Son.' The MS.—with the
exception of one missing page—is now before us ;
fully written out from first to last, as far as one
can judge. It is simple, both in conception and
language, with scarcely anything that may be
called an illustration, and no quotation, except a
goodly array, here and there, of verses from the
Bible. The following is an outline of the sermon.

I. What is contained in reverencing the Son ?

1. Believing in the Son as sent by the Father.
2. Making a public profession of the Son's name.
3. Becoming like the Son in our conduct.

II. The Reasonableness of the Father's expectation that we would reverence the Son.

1. Because of the near relationship between the
Son and the Father.
2. Because of the generous mission on which He
was sent.

Two or three quotations from it may prove useful—as much for registering what may be taken to be the state of the theological mind in Wales towards the middle of the century, as for their own sake. He speaks of the public profession of Christ as necessary, not only for the social mission of Christianity, but for very salvation—that ‘When the Son shall come in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels, He will acknowledge none as His but His church ; He will call no one His brother but he that is a member of His mystic body on earth.’ He proceeds to speak of the honour conferred by Christ on His church :

When some magnificent building is planned on earth great is the trouble and anxiety to get some person of dignity, some king or prince, to lay the foundation stone. Well, if the fame and honour of a building bear connection with the one that laid the stone, this building ought indeed to be honoured, everyone ought to esteem it an honour to belong to it, for no one less than the King of kings, and the Prince of the kings of the earth, in the person of the Son of God, was Himself the founder of this building. . . . He is more jealous for His plan to be respected than He was for His person, while here on earth to be honoured ; and it is very certain that severer punishment awaits those that look with contempt on professing His name, than awaited those that crowned Him with thorns, and robed Him in purple.

In the following quotation will be found something in the nature of a newer theology, for those days :

This love in God was no new thing. A pretty general sentiment has gone abroad that God loves the world only because Christ died for the world ; but the Gospel teaches us that Christ visited and died for the world, not that God might be able to love the world, but because He loved it from everlasting, and that the sending of the Son is a manifestation of this eternal love.

More of his own later mode of phrasing will be found in this extract, carrying on the same theme :

God is Love : the love of the Father and of the Son co-operate to release the slaves of Sin :—the Father's love sending, the Son's love consenting ; the Father's love planning, the Son's love bringing out the plan ; the Father's love ordaining the ' Physician before there was a wound,' the Son's love bringing the medicine within reach of the patients ; the Father's love reckoning upon Him our iniquities, and the Son's love bearing them in His body on the tree. . . . Love is written in large letters upon all the work done from Bethlehem to Calvary.

And this saying shows his gift for putting a truth in a way that would be remembered :

Even the Church of Christ was never known to be perfectly pure on earth. There was in it a Judas when

it only numbered twelve ; and as the branches of the mustard tree extend, the traitors that shelter beneath them increase.

Probably the fact of its being a trial sermon would be a restraint upon his natural vivacity of thought ; at any rate, the other two sermons that belong to this period are far more eloquently conceived, and show that he was already beginning to find himself. One deals with the choice of Moses (Heb. xi. 24-26), and the other with Elisha's prayer for a double portion of Elijah's spirit (2 Kings ii. 9). In both he begins to prove his skill in apt quotation, though at present he does not range beyond such familiar names as Bunyan or Chalmers ; in both there are clear hints of his dramatic power ; in both also he shows his fondness for chained eloquence—a series of variations on a theme, with one refrain. We may instance this, with its refrain—‘ the pleasures of sin for a season ’ :

Direct thy spying-glass again and look upon the Ancient World despising the message of God, and clinging to the pleasures of earth and its sins ; but lo, the clouds gather, the rain comes down, and that Ancient World in all its sinfulness is swept from the stage of time to the great eternal world. What is it but the wheels of the chariot of time imprinting the truth of the words of the text before men—‘ the pleasures of sin for a time ’ ?

Look again upon the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, walking in fornication, uncleanness, and all ungodliness ; but behold ! God sends fire from heaven to blot the Cities of the Plain from the face of the earth. What is it but God again writing—‘ the pleasures of sin for a season ? ’ Look once more : canst thou not see Belshazzar with his thousand lords, so hardened in wickedness that he enjoys sinning—drinking, in his ungodly palace, out of the sacred vessels of the temple of the living God ? but lo ! a finger upon the plaster of the wall writing ‘ Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting ! ’ and ah ! see how his face changes, how his cheek pales, and how his knees smite one against the other ! What is it but a still small voice in the bosom crying—‘ The season of the pleasures of sin is past ! ’

And this, as an instance of his early illustrations, is characteristic :

I remember reading of a telescope which is kept in France, in great honour ; and that, because the chief astronomers of the last generations have gazed through it on the various worlds that whirl in those far-off spaces, have measured by means of it the distance and size of stars and planets that gild those firmamental heavens ; but what is such a telescope compared with the Christian’s telescope—the spying-glass of God’s people—FAITH ? Through this, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of old, gazed on the ‘ City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God ’—through this, the great

host named in the chapter of the text, looked on 'a better country, that is a heavenly'—through this Paul looked on the unfading crown, reserved for him in heaven.

In ordinary cases it is wiser and kinder to pass by these early efforts with apologetic reserve. But from the very first he appeared, not as a preacher in the making, but as a preacher, in many respects, full-grown. He came to write far greater sermons, but it is the unanimous testimony of those who heard him before entering college, and during his collegiate course, that he preached then as eloquently as at any later period.

The fact is, he possessed in a rich measure, as natural endowment, that inimitable and untranslatable Welsh thing—*hwyl*. This may be described as speech, not turning into actual music, but haunted with music—haunted, as a river flowing between wooded banks, with moonlight. But it is much more than melody of utterance: that is only an outward form of something more valuable. The genuine thing is a certain glow of spirit, that no power of man can order at will. I have known *hwyl*—as in the case of Principal Edwards—when there was scarcely any melody of utterance; but there could be no doubt of the presence of '*the thing*,' nevertheless. It goes without saying that *hwyl*, on the other hand, can be imitated: that a man may in this, as in every

other art, become a mere formalist. He may have naturally a certain gift of melodious utterance, and come to live upon that gift, with very little intellectual preparation or spiritual earnestness. Dr. Evans, in his speech at the annual meeting of the Home Missionary Society, in 1876, gave an instance: 'We had an old Welsh preacher, full of what we call *hwyl*—and that word is, like many other Welsh things, untranslatable in English; but *hwyl* means inspiration, "in the spirit" to speak,—and this brother once said in the pulpit, "Oh, I am in the *hwyl* to speak, if only I had something to say!"' The wonder is that Dr. Evans himself was not victimised by his own gift. Had he been less conscientious, less devoted, as a student and as a worker, it would have spoilt him from the first.

For his fame quickly spread, outrunning him, north and south.

I remember him, [writes Rev. T. Pennant Phillips, Llandyssul], before he entered Brecon College, preaching on a Sunday morning at Capel Iwan.¹ He preached

¹ In reference to this visit, it may not be amiss to collate his own autobiographical reference, made in his Home Missionary Speech (1876):

'When I was a lad, I was a member of a small country chapel. We could only afford to get one sermon a Sabbath, and the remuneration for that was always a shilling. Well do I remember my first sermon in that chapel, and that wonderful shilling! Nevertheless, out of that little sanctuary in my time have come forth over a dozen ministers of the gospel.'

that time, as a promising young man, tenderly and very effectively ; and when he cried out—‘ It is better for you to attempt the crossing of the Atlantic in a paper boat, than to attempt getting to heaven without Christ and His sacrifice,’ the effect was electric. Soon after this he was preaching at a farmhouse, still near Capel Iwan, and comparing the Christian’s death to the river Jordan. He preached well, but felt somewhat from a ‘ contrary wind.’ He told a friend at the close of the service—‘ I must leave the river Jordan out for the present ; it does not bring much *hwył*!’ ‘ But you had pretty good *hwył*,’ said his friend. ‘ No, not at all,’ he replied, ‘ I know when the *hwył* comes.’

And that last remark brings out the fact that *hwył* is atmospheric, as well as inward. However much ‘ in the spirit’ the preacher may be, an unsympathetic audience can make his soul’s most lyric strain sound as tinkling cymbal. No one was more sensitive than he to these atmospheric depressions. He knew when he failed, and no one was readier than he to confess it. ‘ He said once,’ remarks Mr. Phillips, to a brother minister, who was also a popular preacher, “ Our influence in preaching is not to be credited so much to our sermons, as to our way of preaching them—with God’s power.” ’

Having so far explained this essential element of his early popularity, as well as of his later fame,

we will make room for a vivid description of his preaching during those first years, kindly supplied by the Rev. Thomas Johns, present Chairman of the Union of Welsh Independents. It will be noticed that the sermon is one of the three mentioned already.

A SERVICE AT LLANDOVERY

He was then at college, and came to preach at Salem on a week evening. His fame as the 'Welsh Spurgeon' had attracted a large audience; the chapel was crowded before the time announced for the service. I, and a number of other young men who were in the town preparing for college, sat in the middle, in a convenient place to see the preacher, and we were, like the rest, filled with expectations. I remember well his coming in, for we watched his progress from the door to the 'big seat,'¹ and his ascent to the pulpit, with much curiosity. Salem pulpit, as it was then, was very high, and there was an echo in the roof somewhere that caused no little trouble to a preacher that was given to shouting. . . . The preacher in the 'big seat' rises to his feet and mounts the tall one-legged pulpit backed to the wall, every eye following him. He appeared in the pulpit a young man above the average height, proportionately made, with a fair, handsome face. His whole appearance was peculiarly winning. As soon as he began to

¹ That is, the communion pew; occupied, in Welsh chapels, mostly by the deacons, and sometimes older members.

give out the first hymn the congregation felt there was a novelty in his gift of speech. The reading of the chapter was natural and well heard, the prayer was earnest, and yet mellifluous. The appropriateness of phrase, the sweetness of his voice, and the warmth of spirit, had increased the expectancy of the crowd, and the house was filled with responsive *amens*. The text of the sermon was 'Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me' (2 Kings ii. 9). The preacher seemed anxious to deliver his message. The delivery was rapid and lively. In his preface he presented some beautiful, natural truths from the context, briefly reviewing the age, and the prophet's character, and remarking that his excellencies were many and his faults few. . . . In the course of his sermon he was dwelling on the prophet's prayerfulness, his earnestness, his faith—and how God proved him, and still proves those that are strong in prayer, when he made a happy use of the wandering musician, playing his instrument before the mansion, and the lady of the house in an upper window listening, holding a silver piece between finger and thumb, delaying to throw it down, in order that he might play on—for the music had delighted her. He applied the comparison—which was new to the audience—and a wave of pleasure seemed to thrill them all. . . . We can now recall the irony of Elijah, and still more the eloquent recital of Elijah's prayer. . . . Many of the sayings and illustrations of that sermon dwell in our memory still. Sometimes we lost sight of the exquisite phrases he used, as the melodious cadences of the voice and the thrilling

shout made us wonder and admire.¹ The 'chanting' was delightful, and the pathos irresistible. Before he had reached half-way through his sermon he played on every emotion as a skilled harper upon his harp. It was a marvellous service—the young preacher in his best *hwyl* preaching, and the congregation, in spite of great expectations, more than satisfied. Dr. Evans seemed then but a boy-preacher, and boyish as a preacher perhaps, compared with what he came to be in the prime of his popularity ; yet his eloquence, and the things he said, left on our minds an indelible impression. We heard him scores of times after that, preaching in crowded chapels, and in the field to thousands ; we saw, many a time, strong men weeping like children beneath his ministry—and we wept with them ; but when we came to ourselves, we recalled that first service in Salem, Llandovery, and it almost overshadowed every other later service. So deeply does the first impression in a young man's mind sink ! Yes, and as certainly as that, there was something in Herber's eloquence in the first years of his career, which wore away as life went on, although he continually gained in power and popularity. We cannot describe it ; but it resembled the bloom on hanging fruit.

It will not be without interest to add that my father distinctly remembers the same sermon,

¹ Those who may have heard him in his missionary speech at Exeter Hall, May, 1873, give the Welsh phrase—*Iachawdwriaeth hyd eithaf y dddear* ('Salvation unto the ends of the earth')—will partly, at least, understand what this meant.

preached by him about the same time in another part of the same county ; and, curiously, what he too remembers most vividly is the illustration of the wandering musician. I cannot think this is so much due to the illustration in itself ; but there must have been something uniquely effective in his way of saying and applying it.

But we repeat—one of the great victories of Dr. Evans was to save himself from himself. His natural eloquence and premature fame might have undone him. He did not escape unhurt ; but it might have been far more harmful than it turned out to be. By his premature fame he was robbed of that early leisure which comes so well to the aid of the popular preacher in his vaster, more strenuous years. To the end, he felt somewhat from his having been so hurried into public view. It made him at times, as he himself felt and said, foolishly anxious. We will again foreshorten the long years, and take this altogether human note from his diary for 1892. He writes under December 1, in view of his approaching visit to Mansfield College :

It has been a dull rainy day, and so very free from visitors. I have Mansfield on the brain, where I am to preach next Sunday. Why cannot I go there and preach the Gospel as it is in me without worry or anxiety ? I am afraid it is because I have accepted an engagement which is above me. Why should I thrust myself to a

false position? But I did not thrust myself; they sought me, and not I them. If it is a mistake, it is theirs and not mine. I have postponed it three times and shall be heartily glad when it is over. *Addysg* ('moral'): See that you do not again place yourself in a false position. *Addysg* 2nd.—Perhaps they need you and your message at Mansfield; so be yourself, like a man, and do not aim to be an academical preacher. They get enough of that; be yourself—and you may be a God-send, and a great memorable blessing.

Surely it is enough that he held on to the end, his best sermon not yet preached,—often in apparent failure too desponding, often diffident after the most sure success.

CHAPTER V

BRECON COLLEGE

(1858-1862)

WHEN he was admitted into Brecon College, in the summer of 1858, he was fortunate in having for college and class mates a number of young men above the average in talent and promise. He owed not a little to several of them, both for wholesome criticism and faithful comradeship. His preliminary fame might have imperilled his welcome, and his comfort at first. 'However,' writes one of them,¹ 'when he made his appearance he at once disarmed all prejudice; he became soon everybody's favourite; and his popularity continued to increase, term after term. And no wonder. He was a tall, good-looking, ruddy youth, cheerful, wide awake, and humorous, and as innocent as the dove; in a word, he was such that

¹ The Rev. D. Rowlands, B.A., now head of the teaching staff at Brecon College. We are indebted to two articles of his in the *Dysgedydd* for much of this chapter.

no one willingly or unwillingly could help admiring and loving him.'

He became known in the town soon after his advent at College: first of all, at a Sunday evening 'Society' in the Methodist Chapel. Having been asked to speak, he stood up without any ceremony; and in a moment or two every eye was fixed upon him, for such a flow of fiery, sparkling phrases had not been often heard. It was the week's talk, that 'some marvellous youth' had just arrived at the College. A few weeks later, on a Sunday evening, he preached at Plough Independent Chapel, with such remarkable effect that enthusiastic admirers began to speak of him as inheriting the most striking qualities of the inseparable triad—John Elias, Christmas Evans, and Williams of Wern. 'Nor was vain admiration the only effect produced by the sermon, for in the Society several prodigals made known that they had returned, seeking a place in their Father's house.'

His previous educational attainments were naturally limited; so that he did not particularly shine in class. He did his work, with honesty and regularity—and that was all. But he began to devote himself to reading, and to the study of general literature; and those who came to know him in later years will easily recall his passion for books. To name him a good book was to earn his

unfailing gratitude. He was the first of the students to discover 'Adam Bede,' when it was published in 1859. But his fellow-student shall again tell the story in his own way :

Such a work as this was to him a feast indeed ; he read some chapters over and over again ; and no excellence, in style or substance, escaped his notice. It was at this time, too, that Longfellow published his 'Hiawatha' and 'Courtship of Miles Standish.' There was much difference of opinion among reviewers as to their merit, especially the first. It was asserted that the metre of 'Hiawatha' was barbarous and uncouth ; and that the poem was not at all worthy of the author's reputation. Many a half-hour did Herber and I spend together reading it ; and, in spite of the superciliousness of omniscient critics, the simplicity and music of the lines, as well as the freshness of ideas, were to us then an inexhaustible delight. That was the time also when a new epoch in the history of English periodical literature was commenced, with the starting of the 'Cornhill Magazine,' under the editorship of Thackeray, and of 'Good Words' under the editorship of Dr. Norman Macleod ; and Herber was a constant reader of both.¹ But he was quite as fond of classic authors, and he was well versed in Shakespeare and Scott. He could repeat from memory long extracts from the former.

¹ And, it may be added, of the *British Quarterly Review*, which came to the College library. He never ceased reviewing it, in later years, in the *Dysgedydd*, till it was given up.

Such glimpses we get of his student-life. Among his fellow-students, he was the soul of every company, 'as open as noon.' Now it is a glimpse of him rising to heights of eloquence in the quasi-important College debates, and in private conferences where intricate questions of the College commonwealth were discussed ; then again it is a glimpse of him in his narrow study, with a new sermon considerably larger than the room ; and he wants to recite it aloud, in order to memorise it, and find out the best mode of delivering it in public. It was not unusual to punish a vocal athlete, who had, with too much exercising, afflicted some thin-eared neighbour in his adjoining study ; but Herber generally went without paying fine. 'It was easy to give the reason why : he had at that time the marvellous gift—which remained his throughout life—namely, of getting his own way in circumstances most unfavourable thereto. And he knew how to dispense rewards. His mother used to send, from time to time, apples and nuts and other delicacies from Pontselly ; and on such occasions he was open-handed enough to share the spoils with others less fortunate.'

The Welsh theological student has one experience that is probably unique. During the summer vacation he has to spend a month or six weeks, visiting the churches of a selected district,

and 'collecting for the College.' He preaches, Sundays and week-evenings, travelling from place to place, and getting what he can in subscriptions and collections. It is not without its unpleasant associations ; but it is a discipline that has yielded valuable experience to many an inexperienced student ; and it helps to keep the colleges in close contact with the churches—a contact that is missing in English college-life. Perhaps it is scarcely necessary to emphasise the fact that Dr. Evans, as a student, was a capital collector. In some districts he did pioneer work, his cheery presence aiding his ready tongue. One, for instance—a son of the manse—has a schoolboy's recollection of his coming through Pembrokeshire on such an errand ; overtaking him and others on the way home from school, and heartily joining with them in the game of ' buttons.' After he had preached in the chapel that evening, he arranged to become his own deacon, and went round the congregation, one by one, receiving their contributions in his hat with a hearty 'Thank you!'

It was during this excise journey through Pembrokeshire that he preached his first English sermon, and met the late Caleb Morris—the famous preacher of Fetter Lane Chapel—and never forgot it. He has himself told the story.

About the year 1859 we were in Pembrokeshire collecting towards Brecon College. We had never attempted to preach in English till we reached Tenby, on that journey ; but it was necessary to face the whole service there in the *iaith fain*,¹ as there was no Welsh cause in the town. We had translated one of our Welsh sermons ; but the thought of the devotional service was a heavy load ; and we were afraid the sermon might take wings and leave us, too. But our comfort was that Tenby at the time was without a minister ; and our chief fear was fear of a preacher. When on the lowest step, mounting the pulpit, I could see a portly, striking man coming in and sitting by the door ; it did not require much insight to make out that he was *somebody* ; and I was foolish enough to turn back and ask who he was. The deacon replied, not without surprise, ‘Don’t you know who he is ? that is the famous Caleb Morris !’ Our feelings can be imagined—preaching for the first time in our life before the prince of London preachers in his day. But at the close of the service, he came in to us, kindly, and invited us to spend the next day with him in his lodgings ; and we shall never forget the feast we enjoyed in his company. He was a man of brilliant genius, one of the greatest preachers that Wales has nursed. But the great man is the quickest to recognise the smallest grain of talent in another : he is sure to perceive it and recognise it. It is men without any talents themselves that deal for ever in subtraction. Two from four—two ;

¹ *Iaith fain* (‘thin language’) : so is the English language irreverently called sometimes by monoglot Welshmen.

that is the one sum of the untalented. They are always taking from : they have no faculty of admiration : so they live upon subtraction. The recollection of our experience with Caleb Morris has assisted us often to preach in the hearing of many a great man after him ; and we record our experience for the benefit of our younger brethren.¹

The year he has already mentioned (1859) was memorable to him for other reasons. The autumnal meetings of the Congregational Union of England and Wales were held at Aberdare ; and he was present. It was the first visit of the Union to Wales, and the interest they created was therefore intense ; and it was important to him, as an introduction to English Congregationalism and its great representatives.

1859 was, once again, for another reason, a solemn and fruitful year to him, as well as to many more. It was a season of widespread revival ; and the excitement in some parts of Wales, as elsewhere, was phenomenal. The students themselves had been to some extent agents and witnesses of exceptional scenes. At a little country chapel in Brecknockshire, called Cwmcamlais, on Sunday, December 11, sermons

¹ This incident comes casually into an article on a 'Sunday Morning with Dr. Alexander Maclaren in his own Chapel' in 1883.

had been interrupted by the fervour of the audience ; and men, usually dumb, moved by the power of the wind which bloweth where it listeth, had risen from dumbness into song—fervent, half unearthly song. It is reported that on one of these occasions, when another student was preaching, and, perhaps, somewhat overstraining the instruments of effect, Mr. Evans whispered to him, ‘ Hold on : it is not time for the *hwy!* yet ! ’ He had himself some remarkable experiences, there and elsewhere, although his health during 1859 was a good deal shaken—owing to the effects of a damp bed, it is grievous to explain. The following extract from a letter written by Dr. John Thomas (December 17, 1859) shows how carefully he was watching his *protégé’s* career :

You have had, I see, an excellent meeting at Cwmcamlais ; I am very glad to hear it. It would do you all, as students, good, if you had more of the spirit of revival among you. It will be better for you to remain as quiet as you can, preaching but little, till about Easter. You will have recovered strength by that time. There are strong expectations that you will be the collector for the College, next summer, here.

Meanwhile, news of strange revival scenes in North Wales, especially in the counties of Montgomery and Merioneth, had reached the College.

And so seven of the students arranged to make a tour in the affected districts, during the Christmas vacation. There was no railway then from Brecon to the two counties named ; so they must hire or walk. Their means did not allow of hiring ; so they started on foot. It was not unusual then for a student to walk twenty miles from Brecon on Saturday, preach twice or thrice on Sunday, and retrace the twenty miles on Monday. They started with a stout heart, therefore, by a picturesque and historic route over a ridge of Eppynt, in the direction of Rhayader. On the summits of Eppynt, they wished to test their vocal powers : in this, we have scarcely any need of the narrator's testimony that Mr. Evans, although a partial invalid, came easily first, his voice resounding in the glens beneath them like a silver bell. They rested the first night at Builth, and found it impossible next morning, tired, and with bruised feet, to continue the journey on foot. So they made common use of what means they had, and hired a conveyance to Rhayader, so as to reach Llanidloes that evening and hold their first service. They received every kindness, but felt no revival excitement. They felt it, however, next day, when they reached Llanbrynmair—that classic home of Independency in Mid-Wales. It was, and is, a quiet rural district, inhabited by staid, thoughtful

men—far more given to theological discussion than to any religious fervours. But that night many of them—especially the younger people—sang and praised, and prayed and spoke, with an abandonment that astounded the seven pilgrim-students. Dr. Evans had bargained, before starting, that he was not to preach more than thrice on the journey, owing to his enfeebled health ; but he preached thirteen times ; and among other places at Dolgelley on the following Sunday. One who was present as a young man has described his appearance then—tall, and slight, and pale—and the thrilling effect produced by his saying, ‘Men ! God fills this place !’—and how the people in going home, and for weeks afterwards, kept repeating, ‘That lad is sure to make his mark.’ But for a vivid sketch of that service—typical as it was of much in 1859—we cannot do better than again let Principal Rowlands describe it :

The service was commenced ; the *amens* were loud and many ; but in comparison with what followed they were but as the whistling of the breeze before the rush of the storm. . . . The preacher was allowed to go through his preface, and to announce the heads of his sermon, with nothing beyond an occasional *amen* disturbing the monotony of the service. But when he began to warm to his subject, and get into the *hwy!*, the crowd could no longer forbear ; they broke out into prayer, and praise,

and they leaped and rushed about in what seemed utter confusion ; the voice of the preacher was entirely drowned, and, after several attempts for a hearing, he sat down in despair. A hymn was given out : that reduced things to order for a brief while ; but when the second preacher undertook his part, he too had to give up like his predecessor, before he had gone through half his sermon. The sight was wonderful beyond description. If ‘ speaking with tongues ’ in the Corinthian church was something like it, to account for the apostle’s perplexity when he was told the manner of it is easy. The only mode of edifying was for the speaker to confine his attention for a while to some one person. One would let his thoughts flow forth, one after the other, unceasingly—chaste, devout, poetical thoughts, though, perhaps, somewhat extravagant ; till he seemed half inspired. But by his side, perhaps, there would happen to be another, repeating what would be, under ordinary circumstances, called blasphemy.

They visited Ffestiniog on a week-day ; and the supremacy of the religious emotion may be inferred from the fact that the quarrymen had been praying for rain, so that rain might hinder them from working in the quarries. And the rain came in torrents, unusual even for Ffestiniog, where, as one of its residents proudly remarked once, on a national occasion : ‘ When it rains, it is worth seeing.’ The consequence was that no

chapel could hold the congregation: and the effects were again indescribable. There were instances of conviction and conversion which 'clearly proved that the forces working in the revival were not as easy to comprehend as superficial men would have us believe.'

They returned to Bala, and had similar experiences. We know that Principal Edwards, then a young man and student, was profoundly moved by 'the things which came to pass in those days;' and it is interesting to think of the two lives touching, really if not actually, in the glow of the revival at Bala that Christmastide—two lives that were to signify so much to Wales and to the Christian Church.

Dr. Evans had started on the journey, as we have seen, in broken health, and sorely depressed in spirits. He had been—owing, as he put it, to the 'unchristian carelessness which has made many a family break the commandment "Thou shalt not kill"'—for months previously unable to preach; and he was afraid his usefulness was done. When he returned, however, he believed he would never be ill any more! 'We had received kindness beyond measure'—so he wrote reminiscently in 1893—'and had witnessed incredible effects. I am thankful to this day for that journey: we experienced inexpressible things,

and I pray that I and others may experience the like again.'

We catch a glimpse of him, with two other students, a few weeks later (March 11, 1860), at Aber and Talybont, two little chapels in Brecknockshire, holding revival services, when eight confessed Jesus Christ, increased during the week to twenty-one. He preached in the same place by himself the following Sunday, when fifteen more were added to the number. These meetings, it may be emphasised, were invariably preceded by much earnest prayer in the churches.

In 1858 the Rev. Thomas Jones had removed from Morriston, a busy artisan suburb of Swansea, to Albany Chapel, Frederick Street, London ; changing the Welsh for the English pulpit, yet retaining and increasing his fame as the Welsh poet-preacher. On Sunday evening, March 24, 1861, it was unanimously passed that Mr. Evan Evans be invited to succeed him ; but he was wise enough to refuse leaving College till the close of the four years, and the church was wise enough to wait for him. He frequently visited and preached at Morriston during those two betrothal years ; and he received far more generous pay than the usual student's fee ; and the gift was frequently devoted to the good of the whole studentry—so that the day of his visit became the College red-letter day.

His comrade, Principal Rowlands, left in the early summer of 1861 ; and we quote from his reminiscences the following incident :

I remember our last walk before I left College. It was about the end of April, and spring had appeared earlier than usual. The trees were bursting into leaf, and the river-meadows greening on every hand ; the cuckoo sang in the distance, and it was responded to by the dulcet notes of the thrush : everything seemed to testify that life was worth enjoying. But I was on the whole sad at heart. The morrow was before me—the morrow when I would have to part for ever with the friends of my college course—and with Herber, in particular. He was trying to console me—he promised to correspond with me regularly—and better than all, he promised to come soon and preach for a Sunday or two in my pulpit. In the midst of our conversation he suddenly stood, and said ‘ Dewi, what do you think you and I will be twenty years to-day ? We ought to leave our mark on the world, in some way or another ; and, believe me, we will be alone to blame if we shall not do so. My belief is that you should be a tutor in a college ; but as for me, preaching is my meat and drink, and I believe it is to that alone I have been called.’ Little did I think then I would be in twelve years a professor at Brecon ; and that years afterwards he would be a principal at Bangor.

Dr. Thomas re-appears once more, candid and watchful as ever, in a letter written December 10,

1861. It may be that the student's unparalleled fame was making his spiritual patron anxious, while it was making others incredulous. Many pooh-poohed his precocious popularity, and prophesied unhappy things. These considerations will help us to give its due value to the warning note in these words :

I did what I could for you, though that was not much, when you were less known and therefore more in need of encouragement : and it is the joy of my heart to see you already arrived at so high a position ; and my solemn prayer for you is that you may be kept, and enabled at all times to conduct yourself worthily of the honour which the Churches unanimously, it seems, give you . . . I hope you will be protected by Providence in your journeying to the Metropolis, and back ; and that you will be successful there, not only to get money, but to be also a blessing to souls ;—and when you are led to the field of your stated labour, that the light of God upon your tent will be clear, and His blessing upon your ministry.

Fortunate as he was in his fellow-students, with still greater honour must the name of Principal Morris be recorded. He was not only a sane and accomplished theologian, but a man of rare spiritual authority. He left his impress on more than one generation of preachers that have served the churches well, in Wales and

England. He passed away at the close of November 1896—outjourneying his pupil by one brief month. In a letter of sympathy written to the daughter at the time, Dr. Evans has enshrined his gratitude and his lasting affection :

November 28, 1896.

I was greatly shocked when I heard that my old tutor and friend, your dear father, has been called home. I little thought when I wandered with him over the walks at Llandrindod, talking about the New Theology and the Higher Critics, that it would be our last chat here for ever.

It is pleasant now to remember that I suggested that he should be called to preside at the Holy Communion : and some of us will never forget that blessed time of refreshing. I have heard others say that it was good for all of us to be there.

Your father was undoubtedly a devout good man, and I shall never forget his prayers with the students at the family altar. We were all one then, as we bowed the knee, and felt that we were led in prayer by one who had power with God, a prince of high heaven.

He has influenced more students than any man in Wales ; and the news of his promotion brought to all of us many recollections of Principal Morris and his intelligent partner in life, now met for ever in the blessed land of life. It has been said that kindness is a moral Savings Bank, where a man may store up happiness for others, as well as for himself. Your dear parents have

stored up much in this bank, and some of the stored up happiness for others will come out to their children.

It remains only to add that he was firmly loyal to his College to the end of his life. He sent gifts of books and money for its library ; he attended its committees, and presided more than once at its annual meetings ; he stood by it in critical times, and aided and rejoiced in its prosperity and progress. He was present when the new building was opened in 1869, and called ' Memorial ' College — ' memorial ' of the Two Thousand of 1662, but quite as much of the untiring devotion of his friend Dr. Thomas. In the course of his speech on the occasion, he said it was the greatest deed of Welsh Independents in that age: ' and the term " Independents " suggested many of the hindrances that had to be overcome ; because a crotchety Independent was far more troublesome as an opponent of public movements than a crotchety Methodist or Presbyterian—there was no need to give the reason why ! '

PART II.
FIRST PERIOD OF MINISTRY
(1865-1879)

'I will darken the earth on a clear day'

CHAPTER I

LIBANUS, MORRISTON

HE was ordained at Libanus, Morriston, June 25 and 26, 1862. The ordination prayer was offered by Dr. John Thomas ; the charge to him was given by Principal Morris, and to the church by its former minister, the Rev. Thomas Jones. To be the successor of a famous man had its advantage as well as its disadvantage. Prudence and devotion can often shape the very disadvantage into an opportunity. The youthful successor had himself gathered fame ; and what he had won might have too easily satisfied him, but for outward stimulus as well as consecration of the soul within. As a rule, in the sequence of ministers in any given church, contrasts are more likely to prove successful. Although, in this case, the rule might appear to have been disregarded, inasmuch as the eloquence of the two, at a distance, seemed too much akin, there was, at closer view, a redeeming difference. The eloquence of Thomas Jones was chaste,

restrained, taking the soul in a magic spell: the eloquence of Dr. Evans, especially in those years, was a perfect rush of power. The 'clear-cut Celtic features' of the former, as Robert Browning has portrayed him, 'the lips compressed as with the retention of a discovered prize in thought or feeling,' and then 'the sensibility quivering through that rich and flexible voice, and an illumination of intellect in every expressive feature,'¹ suggests quite another order of preacher than he whom we younger men know best—broadly built, genial, careful of few or no restraints, hurrying his audience through sunny glades, where the dew on leaf and flower easily caught a sunbeam. Thomas Jones thrilled and charmed; Herber Evans thrilled and roused.

In those experimental days, he worked hard, preparing carefully. There are fragments of prayers he wrote, of addresses for ordinary occasions, as well as of sermons, proving that he had then the good habit of making every occasion an opportunity. He never slackened in his reading: he never missed a chance of seeing or of hearing a great man.

A letter written to Mrs. Morris, wife of Principal Morris, a few days after his ordination (July 7,

¹ Introduction to the *Divine Order and other Sermons*, pp. xii, xiii.

1862), gives some of his first impressions of his new surroundings.

. . . Let me begin by praising yesterday's sermons—*à la*—No, no, that won't do, although I may say that I never enjoyed a Sunday better in my life. We had a Communion : I never realised the solemnity of that ordinance until yesterday. It was a grand sight, about 450 sitting down in silence which was almost painful ; and yet I could not break it by uttering a word : the whole affair had an air of sacredness to me, which was elevating and beautiful . . . I baptised four good, healthy—what —— would call—little angels, yesterday. I dare say some of you would prefer witnessing that part of yesterday's proceedings. Well, it was a solemn thing to see them, although I smiled at the idea many times before. If you were present you would receive some good, wholesome advice, how to bring up children. I think a young man can do that better than a married one, as the latter knows too much about the difficulty. . . . Morris gave me a very good character at the house where he stayed. Everything comes out in this world. I thank him sincerely.

The chapel had been enlarged during Mr. Jones's ministry ; and a portion of the debt remained. But it had to go. A note, in a denominational monthly, for 1863, referring to the first anniversary of his settlement, tells us the debt was fast disappearing ; 'and we advise the good people

of Libanus to undertake the enlargement of their chapel, without delay ; for we understand it is much too small to contain the people that would come there, if they could find room. There is influence enough in the ministry of Mr. Evans to fill a chapel twice the size, and strength enough of body and mind in him to preach in such a building, and people enough in Morriston to fill it.'

Another June came round, and with it Jubilee services to celebrate the extinction of the debt. At a public meeting the minister was presented with books to the value of 20*l.*, by the senior deacon—and a gold watch, by Miss Hughes (now wife of Sir John Williams, M.D.)—on behalf of the church. The following quotation, from his speech in returning thanks, gives us a glimpse of his inner history during those two years :

I would be guilty of merest affectation were I to try and conceal my gratification and gratefulness to you for these gifts. The books would have been profitable to me, and the watch serviceable, had I received them when I came here from College ; but to-day I put a higher price upon them than their use and service. I look upon them as the testimony of some 700 people that they are content with my ministry, and are wishful for me to stay among them. None but God in heaven knows what anxiety I had about taking the charge of this church two years to this month. I remember bidding farewell, the

evening of my ordination day, to Dr. Thomas, who has just addressed you (and who was as a father to me at the beginning of my career) : no traveller ever bade farewell to his home, no child to its mother, with feelings more mixed, more anxious. To leave my College life and face the ministry in Libanus was to me the same as leaving a familiar beloved home, to face an untrodden, sandy desert, to travel which I had no experience—one here and there telling me, after I had decided to make the journey, that others before me had been bruised there, and that the inhabitants were none of the kindest ; others saying it was a serious thing to become successor to one whose praise was throughout Wales, and to-day throughout the United Kingdom ; others holding that every young man ought to go to some Jericho to tarry some years till his beard grew, and not venture to take a large, important church at first. And another thing that disturbed my mind more than all was this : I knew the expectations of the church from me were far too high ; and for a year I could not but be anxious lest a reaction should follow. I used to recall Carlyle's saying about the man who dares constantly to call the crowd around him—that popularity kindles a flame about a man, which must do one of two things, either prove that he is worthy of the position he has assumed, or burn and consume him out of the way. But now, at the end of the two years, I have nothing but gratitude to express, to them and to God. I have found the church—its officers, its members, and the congregation as well—all that a young minister could wish.

At the meeting there was a pleasant dispute between two that claimed the young minister who was being honoured. Dr. Thomas naturally claimed him, but the Rev. John Williams, Newcastle Emlyn, whom we have met before in this history under happy auspices, was there also to put in a claim : ' He is a Newcastle man, every inch of him. All his relatives (and they were good people) had been there always—and before that. He was not, any more than Mr. Thomas, ashamed of Mr. Evans, who was a giant in body and mind, and one of the most popular preachers of Wales.' Such a controversy about ' Homer dead ' and grown famous would not have been strange : but it suggests something, when we remember it was about a two-year-old minister.

Later, that summer, he paid a short visit to Switzerland ; but we have no notes of it, except the mere fact that he visited, among other places, Geneva, Chamounix, and Lauterbrunnen.

How Geneva affected him, we learn from this note, written exactly thirty years after :

I remember standing once in Geneva beside the grave of John Calvin, and musing how one good man had so lived as to win more world-wide renown than the place in which he toiled. On the tombstone was nothing but J. C., but every stranger might know they were meant for John Calvin, because no green grass was

allowed to grow around the spot from the frequent feet of visitors who wished to stand on the little ground of his grave. Geneva : John Calvin !—one great man was greater than the town, and attracting a larger number into it, scores of years after he had fallen asleep. I shall always remember that Sunday in Geneva, when I was allowed to stand in the pulpit of the immortal divine, not to preach but to muse—and when I went from his pulpit to his grave, to look ‘over the edge’—how the most beneficent life ends here. I recalled his history, his influence in that town, his mistakes in the midst of his popularity, the great man grown persecutor of Servetus, and afterwards bearing his punishment, and verifying the old record—Calvin was a man made to suffer as we are!¹ I had no companion that Sunday in Geneva, on the shore of the Lake with its exquisite surroundings, the Alps in the distance like a golden-white frame enclosing the picture. Looking hither and thither, meditation after meditation came, of Gibbon completing his immortal history—of Rousseau born there—of Byron singing ‘The Prisoner of Chillon’—and of others less famous who had lived on the incomparable shores of the Lake, with its deep-blue waters as the blueness of the sky. But it was John Calvin, servant of the Most High God ‘that liveth for ever,’ who attracted me there, and preached to me that Sunday a silent sermon that has influenced me ever since, until we meet in the Holy City.²

¹ So the Welsh version of James v. 17.

² ‘Monthly Note’ in the *Dysgedydd*, August 1895.

Before another June had come round, the continuance of his ministry at Morriston was seriously threatened. He had been on a tour through Carnarvonshire in 1862, in connection with the commemoration of the Two Thousand. That same year a new Independent Chapel, called 'Salem,' was opened in the town of Carnarvon. The new church was formed almost entirely of members of an older Independent Church in the town—Pendref—whose minister at the time was Dr. David Roberts. His ministry had proved sufficiently fruitful to make the inauguration of a new church desirable; and some of the best members of Pendref were told off to start it. As Dr. Roberts put it: 'We gave you not only the wool, but the sheep as well.' No one had been more active in the fresh movement than Mr. John Hughes, jeweller and watchmaker: a man of transparent goodness—'not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.' His life was cut short: he died in peace at Hyères, France, February 11, 1864.¹ He left an only daughter, to whom Dr. Herber Evans became engaged. She was much against leaving her mother, and migrating south; so that when he was called to

¹ The incident of his joyful death is introduced at the close of the sermon on 'The Joy of Christian Work' (*True and False Aim* etc., p. 257).

the pastorate of the young church, her influence undoubtedly helped to bring him. To leave a strong flourishing church, adorned with a famous name, and leave a populous district where Congregationalism was an indisputable power, and settle in a less populous district, where Congregationalism was comparatively weak, and the church to be made, and its debt to be paid, was no small risk. It had one sovereign attraction, though : it gave him a chance of making a tradition, instead of following one.

Libanus used every legitimate means to keep him ; but in vain. They presented him, in leaving, with his portrait, and an illuminated address. Writing to his bride-elect, he says : ‘Do you know the joke in Morriston about my likeness? “There he is, as he leaves us : heaven knows what he will be like when he has spent two years in the North !”’ In the address the following testimony is borne to him, and to his relations with the church :

The cordial and affectionate relations that have existed between you and us, since you became our Pastor, cannot otherwise than make their severance most painful.

When three years ago you came to take spiritual charge of us, we hoped to have long retained your services. It has been ordered otherwise. Since that time you have been the means—through your fervid

eloquence, your zeal, and devotion to your sacred office, and your eminent qualities as a Preacher and Minister, —of greatly multiplying and strengthening those who fight under the banner of Christ. The Gospel has in you a sincere and earnest advocate.

You also possess, and have manifested in a happy manner, the power of calling forth the Christian liberality of the churches, and of rousing them into spiritual activity.

He returned, after the farewell meeting had passed, to hold a baptismal service on a week-evening ; and the scene, unexpected as it was, proved almost unbearable to one so quick to feel kindness and appreciate loyalty. From the letter we have quoted above, we quote again :

The floor of the chapel was crammed ; I felt like steel going in ; one of my *true friends* commenced the service : he prayed so beautifully and earnestly that God should accompany me, that we all cried. Oh, I cried ! After he had finished I got up to give a hymn out, and broke down for the first time since I gave notice. The scene now was most pitiful : my whole body literally sobbed ; the people failed to sing. I spoke again for some time, and at the close gave out—

Ffarwel, gyfeillion anwyl iawn
(Farewell, beloved friends, farewell).

The people could not sing. I prayed, and broke down again. It was unbearable. . . . They would not go from

the chapel, but clung round me, weeping . . . Oh, Jenny, had you seen them, you too would pity them !

When the relations between a Congregational minister and his church—especially his first church—are on both sides happy, they contain elements of tenderness that are peculiarly fine. He was a man to be strongly loved, because he loved strongly.

An estimate of his character, and of his work at Morriston—singularly valuable as being the estimate of an outsider—is given in the course of a letter written at the time of his death by the late Archdeacon Griffiths, of Neath :

I knew him as a neighbour, struggling with the difficulties of his first charge, and putting forth his exceptionally great powers in the discharge of his various and many public duties. He appeared to me as a man who was convinced that he had before him a great work—a man who showed a determination that that work should not be frustrated by want of effort on his part.

I read with much interest the rapid development of high qualities that distinguished his career, when he migrated to the northern parts of the Principality. I often quoted him as a man 'racy of the soil'—a position that he never was ashamed of, but rather gloried in, and fondly cherished—rising with remarkable rapidity to a place in the affections of his fellow-countrymen that hundreds, with far greater early advantages, could not, without mixed feelings of astonishment and envy, mingled

with intense admiration and goodwill, look upon ; and not only his fellow-countrymen, but also the dwellers in the great cities of the Kingdom, who listened to an oratory of a very rare character, in which the individuality of the preacher asserted itself, and lent power and interest to the words that flowed from his lips.

Before we follow him northward, it will not carry us from our purpose to return and take from those three years' record two episodes of some significance. Soon after his ordination, he was due to preach on a Monday evening at the anniversary of Capel Als, Llanelly. When he arrived at Landore station, to go down with the 4 train, he found he had mistaken 4 A.M. for 4 P.M. There was a luggage train going, and, after telegraphing to the head office in London, he was permitted to travel with it. Before he reached the chapel, another preacher had commenced preaching in his stead, but he abruptly closed as soon as he saw Dr. Evans, who began by saying, 'You see I am in a bath of perspiration : owing to a mistake, I have had to come from Morryston by a luggage train ; and I shall take a text that fits in with the circumstances—"I have learnt, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."' At the close of the service the minister told him : 'I was quite offended with you for breaking your promise ; no young preacher ought ever to break

his promise, as to-night—when there were over a thousand people expecting you. But there, you saved your head by your fidelity.’ The modified rebuke was all the harder to bear, as the minister, the Rev. David Rees, was one of the heroes of his boyhood—one of the first to stir the depths of his nature and awaken in him the desire to become a preacher. He had also been in his home, during his student days, and had learnt ‘the meaning of what Sainte-Beuve has said of Vinet—that he was one of the *school of Christ*.’ Before the end of his life he had to break many a promise ; but never without pain, associated with that evening’s lesson.

Another episode gives us a glimpse of his inner life. On the leaf that comes between the two Testaments, in a Bible presented to him by his mother, June 1862, there are some private resolutions, including (1) Reading a portion of the Bible, along with Dr. Chalmers’s ‘Bible Readings,’ every morning, in his study before prayer ; (2) Doing nothing in the course of the day that may tend to make the reading of the Bible and praying unpleasant. They are dated February 29, 1864 ; and redated June 19, 1865. If not in that exact form, the spirit of those rules guided him through life. He never became estranged from his Bible, or from the Throne of Grace.

CHAPTER II

SALEM, CARNARVON

1865-1871

THE Secretary of Salem Church, in sending him the formal invitation to the pastorate (June 22, 1865), wrote: 'You may depend upon it that it is the wish of *every member* of the church for you to come.' His formal acceptance was made known to the church on Sunday evening, August 20: and they re-affirmed their gratification by a unanimous show of hands, even the children joining. The following week the chapel was registered for marriages, so that his might be the first in it. His marriage took place September 20; and some twenty-five years later he wrote this brief note in his 'Perennial Diary:'

1865: *September 20*.—I was married at Salem, Carnarvon, to Jennie, a beautiful girl, in her twenty-fourth year. She was very dear to me, and was all that I expected her to be, for the ten years she helped me in my work. She was a true Christian.

They had two daughters—Lizzie (now the wife of Rev. O. L. Roberts, Tabernacle, Liverpool), and Winnie, who passed away in 1867, some five months old.

He began his ministry at Salem, the last Sunday of October, 1865. It was the custom then—and the good, wholesome custom still prevails—for the ministers of Pendref and Salem to exchange regularly on Sunday mornings. This explains the following note, taken from the same diary (October 24, 1890):

It was this week twenty-five years ago that I was preparing my first sermons as minister at Carnarvon. I preached in the morning at the Old Guildhall, Pendref being then under repair: at Salem, at night, I preached on '*Gweddiwch drosof*' ('Pray for me'). I am thinking to-night of all the changes since then. Then we lived at 1 St. Helen's Terrace. We had enough to keep us, but no money over; and sometimes, for years, we needed more To-night I am at Bryn Seiont, with money to spare, a splendid house, and much comfort, a good wife and daughter. Winnie and Owen Herber are in heaven with Jennie.

Praise God, O my soul, for all His goodness.

We have inserted the above as it stands, to remove a false impression. He was considered to be, comparatively, a well-to-do minister; but this is true of him in his latter years only.

The recognition service took place at Salem, November 13; and in Salem that evening was the flower of the contemporary Independent ministry in Wales: Dr. William Rees, Dr. Thomas Rees, Dr. Roberts, Dr. John Thomas, Revs. William Ambrose, E. Stephens (Tanymarian), John Davies (Cardiff), and Robert Thomas (Bala). They were all his elders; but his power and fame had already given him the right to be ranked with them. It was a group of the mighty: and as they appear and re-appear in the story of his life, a brief characterisation will not be out of place. Dr. THOMAS REES (Swansea) was the best known of them to English Congregationalists, both by his *History of Protestant Nonconformity in Wales*, and as chairman-elect of the Congregational Union in 1884—taken home within a week of his expected appearance to deliver his chairman's address in May. He was a simple, evangelical preacher of the old style, and spoke invariably in a minor key—but a minor key that lent itself to charming variations. He schooled himself into English, learning the Dictionary by heart: he had no college training, and yet became an expert theologian. Dr. JOHN THOMAS (Liverpool) was also familiar to English Congregationalists: it was he who became the substitute-chairman of the Union in 1885. He was the statesman of Welsh Independency; a

man, as we have already said, of indomitable will ; an ardent and unflagging advocate of religious equality ; the recorder of his denomination, and a capable journalist ; a trenchant, stern preacher, but melting at times into exquisite tenderness. The Rev. JOHN DAVIES was a man of many gifts—all of them good, though none of them surpassingly so, unless his earnestness take that degree. He was the lucid expositor of his day—careful in form, comprehensive in outlook, practical through and through. The Rev. WILLIAM AMBROSE (Portmadoc) represented in one striking personality the cultured gentleman, and the frequent Welsh combination of lyric poet-preacher. He knew the use of irony—as Dr. Evans discovered to his cost during his first tour in North Wales in 1862. He had preached at Bangor, on a week-evening, and a woman in the congregation had been carried away by what seemed to be revival fervour, and the entire audience was more or less moved. Mr. Ambrose was sitting in the pulpit during the sermon ; and as soon as Dr. Evans had finished, he quietly asked : ‘ Do you know who the woman was that went into raptures ? ’ ‘ No, I do not,’ was the reply. ‘ Oh, some woman out of her mind in this city.’¹ Each came to know

¹ Dr. Evans himself tells the story, with evident amusement, in one of his *Monthly Notes* (June 1894).

the other better afterwards and esteem one another highly. The Rev. ROBERT THOMAS (Bala), one of the most famous of field preachers, had much of the imaginative reach of Christmas Evans, and a voice that could warm into perfect music. He had no college training, and yet he too, by sheer self-culture, became Lecturer in Theology at Bala College. The Rev. EDWARD STEPHENS (Tany-marian) was a musician-preacher, composer of an effective Welsh oratorio, 'The Storm of Tiberias,' and co-editor of the first Congregational Hymnal with Tunes: as a preacher, well versed in experimental religion, and capable of producing thrilling effects by his dramatic sentences and fire and melody of voice. These were all men of distinguished gifts; but the man of genius among them all was Dr. WILLIAM REES (*Hiraethog*)—equally prince of lecturers, journalists, poets, and peer of the greatest preachers of his country. His sermon, as a rule, was a complete drama—containing as many anachronisms often as a drama of Shakspeare, and all the more effective for that very reason: but it was a drama, let it be remembered, that had for its plot the heart of man and the grace of God.

His fellow-minister at Carnarvon, Dr. David Roberts, was master of an idiom all his own; a dreamer of luminous dreams; gentle-spirited, and

true as steel.¹ They laboured affectionately together, till Dr. Roberts removed in 1872 to Wrexham.

Other eminent contemporaries of his there were: some have been already introduced, others will be, in due course. But grouped as these are here, for the moment, they show it was no easy task for a young minister to take rank among them, and even to stand, in the end, for conquering eloquence, at the head of them all. But such a fellowship of the mighty compelled him to be ever at his best.

When he began his ministry at Salem, the membership of the church is given as 181. The congregations rapidly increased, and the church could register a substantial improvement year by year. For instance, during 1866 the net increase was 42; in 1867, 76; in 1869, 24; in 1871, 17—so that in 1873 it could be recorded that 242 members had been received since his advent.

Those were bright years, for him and for the church. Every year seemed to add to his fame, and to his opportunity for doing good. There was a heavy debt on the chapel buildings; he attacked it pluckily from the first, so that by 1867 he had got the church into the right mood, to join

¹ Author of an English volume—*A Letter from Heaven and other Sermons*—translated from the Welsh.

with him in a special effort to clear 1,000*l.* This having been done, he allowed himself and the church a year's rest by way of change; but only to return again to the attack. Bright years—years of favour among his own people, throughout Wales, and beginning to be heard of in English religious spheres—bright, but shadowless by no means. He was haunted in his home by a vague fear, that seemed, in 1871, to be growing actual. He made very few entries in his diaries during those years; life was too busy for indulging in autobiography: but some of the first pages of a diary for that year are filled in with ominous notes. He begins with himself; but soon forgets himself in his anxiety for another:

1871

January 1st.—Carried a very severe cold with me into 1871—a very unpleasant relic of the old year.

— is in the house with us. He takes his life as a preacher far quieter than I ever did. The Scylla and Charybdis are indolent heedlessness and over-anxiety. Popularity is a great burden to anyone who is very fearful of losing it. Every preacher ought to strive to elevate his motives above popular applause or censure. It is very difficult, but it can be done and it is worth all trouble.

Waited the old year out at Anglesea House, Holyhead: a most hospitable roof. Mrs. Griffith is one of the

few left who never thinks she is doing too much for a minister.

3rd, Tuesday.—Found that Jenny had taken a severe cold. How difficult it is to persuade her to be careful of her health ! She is always too venturesome when well. She is nevertheless the right wife for me. Very sensible—very good ; superior to her husband in many things.

4th, Wednesday.—Prayer meeting—the praying *hwyl* is very low in town and through the whole country. There is something wrong, radically.

14th, Saturday, 5 P.M.—Jenny is seriously ill, an attack of bronchitis. I have just read in the paper that Mrs. Moffat and Dean Alford have suddenly died from the same : what a gloom it has cast over me ! I have sent for the doctor the second time to-day. I am fearfully afraid of the violent ways of death. I feel so sad to-night. My sermons are not at all in character with my feeling : how little a man knows on Thursday, in selecting texts, what may meet him before they are preached ! Poor Jenny—she is low and sad to-night. I never knew a cough that could frighten her before.

15th, Sunday.—God grant that the Sunday bring relief and light to my home ! How sad my years generally commence : winters are now my dread !

30th, Monday.—The white leaf for the last fortnight has been taken out : it was a fortnight of illness in the home. It can never be taken out of my memory, and I hope it has left an influence upon my mind. Preaching in the Psalms yesterday :—strongly inclined to turn to the Psalms when trial comes.

A very ordinary Sunday yesterday.

Jenny is better to-day : Lizzie is very pale, and coughing. I cling to her more than ever ; one child makes one very nervous when there is anything the matter with her. May our Heavenly Father allow us to keep her !

31st, *Tuesday*.—Met Mr. Ambrose at the station, going to Port Dinorwic ; the stroke has shattered him quite : what an awful visitation this paralysis is ! I dread it myself, because preachers are so apt to get strokes. The wreck of a great man is a pitiable thing ; yet the sufferer to-day did not seem to feel it as I, a looker on, did : is it not a merciful thing that human nature has such a power of fitting itself to circumstances ?

February 2nd, Thursday.—Jenny had a bad night—she is getting nervous of her cough. Dr. Roberts has promised to blister her to-night ; the very fact that he has kept so long without doing it causes me to feel queerish about it. I hope the best, but fear it will weaken my dear wife much.

3rd, *Friday*.—My dear wife is very ill to-night, the blister has weakened her very much. I am not at all a good one to get on under difficulties—everything must be smooth in home and chapel before I can produce my best. I do my work wretchedly now.

4th, *Saturday*.—Ill, ill, ill ! Making a sermon on the Lord's Prayer : very difficult to say *Dy ewylllys a wneuler* (Thy will be done). My mind quite barren.

5th, *Sunday*.—A Communion Sunday with very little

comfort. . . . A minister ought not to be *obliged* to preach under all circumstances. How can a man preach when his sympathies have been exhausted all the week ?

10th, *Friday*.—She is much worse again to-day.

11th, *Saturday*.—Much weaker, seems to be sinking. About 10 o'clock she had an awful fit of hysteria. . . . Dr. Williams stayed with me until 12 ; she slept about 2.30. It is in such a crisis as this that a man realises the beauty of the promise : ' He giveth His beloved sleep.'

12th, *Sunday*.—A Sunday never to be forgotten. Preached on *Ailenedigaeth* ('Regeneration') in the morning. Jenny was much worse by the night ; could not go to chapel ; they held a prayer meeting. Oh ! that their prayers for my dear wife would be answered !

It is now 1 A.M. She is crying piteously ; her love for me, that she has kept to a great extent latent when well and strong, now bursts forth. Poor girl, may the Lord make me worthy of her, and allow me one chance of nursing her like a child again ! I know she never will be strong, and yet this makes me more anxious that she should be near me. Oh ! how hard it is to think as I do to-night that there is a stronger arm than mine drawing her from my side to His ! How I have prayed, and yet how useless seems all my crying—what a mystery seems to surround me to-night ! How my soul is agitated—sometimes ready to doubt everything and become very hard ! When you have cried for *sleep* to a loving one, as I have done, and then hear her moan and cough and toss about all night—oh, is it not enough to make one doubt the efficacy of his prayers ? And yet

I am quite ready to bear all except losing her ; and, who knows ? perhaps prayers are only meant to enable us to say as Jesus—‘ Let this cup pass if possible ; but not my will ! ’

The shadow passed, but not the fear. It was well for him that his days of leisure were few, and that obligations, old and new, were many. There are fears that grow faint only in the glow of work—that glow in which, as with Ixion, even

Despair’s murk mists blend in a rainbow of hope.

CHAPTER III

THE PUBLIC PLATFORM

HE could not well be his mother's son without being an ardent and well-informed politician. He was born when the 'morning-looks' of reform were in the land. Even the Rebecca Riots, abortive as they were, helped to rouse the people to a sense of their need. It was at that time (in 1843), that the first Welsh newspaper—properly so called—was brought out under the editorship of Dr. William Rees ; and in that same year a vivacious little penny monthly, called the *Cronicl*, was started by the Rev. Samuel Roberts (S. R.), and moved among the people like a fiery cross of reform. Both newspaper¹ and monthly have lived on to the present day. The 'little *Cronicl*,' as it used to be called, was his mother's favourite reading as well as his own in his early years. He was especially charmed by the sermons and dialogues of J. R.—the editor's brother.

¹ *Baner ac Amserau Cymru* (Denbigh).

In 1847 an Education Commission visited Wales. It is doubtful if, in the long course of Commissions, anything more fatuous was ever planned. The Commissioners lent themselves, with ponderous eagerness, to be misled. They came to make a case, and their success was as complete as it turned out to be futile. When their Report was published, the indignation against it was almost national ; and it helped to give life to a national cause. The names of those who defended the fair name of Wales, by evidence that turned the Commissioners' Report into a perennial object of laughter, are still cherished with affection and reverence. One of them, Ieuan Gwynedd, wrote valiantly in English and Welsh—wrote on his dying bed ; and when he passed away at the age of 32, in 1852, his early death seemed to consummate the romance of an heroic life and of a people's cause. They were living days ; how could so impressionable a nature as that of Dr. Evans escape being moulded by them ?

Nor must we forget his Sunday School teacher at Bryn Sion—the Christian shoemaker and politician, whose father was buried in Cardigan-shire ; and after the Liberal defeat in that county in 1874 did he not seriously think of removing the remains from soil so desecrated ? When, again, the young apprentice came to be an honorary

member of the rustic senate at Rhyd Lewis, could he have kept his soul aloof, even had he wished it? Or once more, in Liverpool, how could anyone be an admirer and disciple of Dr. Thomas, and remain ungirt for political warfare?

But it was the year 1868 that made Wales, and at the same time made him and many more, politically. It dates a new era, and a name that for ever gives it distinction is the name of Henry Richard. Landlordism was terrified, and became vindictive. The election was followed by a series of inhuman evictions; and those scenes have so impressed themselves on the national imagination and memory that they are almost unavoidable resorts for the historian and historical novelist. Vindictiveness as usual bit itself. The scandal of the evictions—especially in Cardiganshire—roused the whole country. A public conference and demonstration was held at Aberystwyth, November 19, 1869. The evening meeting, in particular, ‘would never be forgotten by a man or woman, a youth or maid of those present, as long as they lived’—according to the most vivid description of it published at the time.¹ Dr. Evans was one of

¹ By the ‘*Gohebydd*,’ as he is invariably called. His proper name was John Griffith; but in writing a weekly Welsh letter from London to the *Baner* he came to be known as ‘*Gohebydd Llundain*’ (‘London Correspondent’), and finally as ‘*The Correspondent*.’ His place in Welsh journalism is quite unique: neither

the speakers ; and it is enough to say that it was one of the most eloquent and most impressive occasions of his life. Let one quotation suffice to show the spirit of the whole. After referring to the well-worn accusation against Nonconformist preachers of preaching political sermons ‘ somewhere, sometime,’ and declaring that henceforth the man who named Daniel in his sermon would be making what would be, ‘ in the eyes of that tribe,’ a political reference, he proceeded :

These persecuted families are constantly advised to emigrate—because there is plenty of land in America. True enough ; but is it not a grave misfortune for a country to see its honest, brave, just peasantry leaving its territories?—to see its old homesteads filled with a suppler race, of less inflexible conscience?—to see them given up to a people of an indiarubber conscience? Men that can scheme to get possession of the homes of the persecuted—men that can enjoy the wealth they gain through the turning out of families from their houses—the children of such people must be a despised race, babes and weaklings in conscience as well as in morality. Can we with unconcern look forward to the life of our nation being so sucked dry? Never, by any means ! It would be a very great misfortune for us to see the rich veins of coal getting

before nor since has there been anything like those London letters—London being synonymous with anywhere. He was one of Dr. Evans’s closest, wisest friends, till his death in December, 1877.

THE PUBLIC PLATFORM 115

exhausted in the depths of our land ; it would be a grievous misfortune to see the last stone dug out of our fine quarries ; but all that would be nothing compared with the mere suggestion that the friends of truth and the bodyguard of righteousness are to perish out of the land.

When the honourable member for Merthyr [Mr. Henry Richard] told us here to-night of a father and mother and seven children being turned out of their home, my heart was sore to think of what the lost homes meant to those turned out. These homesteads are nothing but stones and mortar, to you, oppressing landlords of Wales ! but to them every stone, every nook is sacred. There were they born ; there they played away the hearty days of childhood ; there their mothers taught them the first lessons in religion ; and there their parents breathed back their own soul into the bosom of God. That hearthstone is to you nothing but the common stones of the quarry ; but to them it is holy ground, where their fathers and mothers offered earnest prayers on their behalf, where they received their last counsels before they went out to engage in the great battle of life.

Among those present was the late Mr. Samuel Morley, who from that day became a friend of Wales, and remained so throughout the years. It was that speech, and the presence and goodwill of Mr. Morley, that gave Dr. Evans his entrance into English public life.

Although he never became an educationist in politics and a national leader, in the sense that Dr. Thomas undoubtedly was, he did not disappear from the platform after the meeting at Aberystwyth. He was there again the following year, at an education conference, and took as effective a part as at the former time. Indeed, from 1870 to 1874, he entered thoroughly into the struggle for free national education. And in that latter year he had to fight, hand to hand, in his own town.

From 1870 the town had been, ecclesiastically, much exercised by the militant methods of its spiritual overseer—the late Dean Edwards. He was, for a Welsh ecclesiastic, a man of exceptional power, well equipped in the matter of Church defence, eager for battle, and at all times an honourable opponent. Naturally, in the education controversy, he had his side to take and Dr. Evans had his. It was an element of strength in both, that neither underestimated the power of the other. It is related that, on a later occasion in their lives, Dr. Evans, with many other leaders of the movement, was speaking at a great Disestablishment demonstration in the town, when the Dean was present. A clergyman sitting beside him thought it was time to leave when Dr. Evans began to speak : but the Dean, in a stage whisper, said somewhat brusquely—‘Sit down : I must hear

Herber.' And he did hear Herber, in one of his wittiest, smartest moods, changing, as he neared the end, into fine eloquence—heard him deal with his own speech in a way that seemed to laugh it bodily away, but always in good-humoured laughter. The Dean, in the spirit of Charles Lamb hissing at his own ill-fated play, enjoyed it as much as possible, and joined heartily in the applause, saying to his companion—'I expect you are glad by this time that you did not go out. He was grand.' When the Dean died a tragic death in 1884, no more genuinely appreciative words were spoken by anyone than by Dr. Evans.

But in the early months of 1874 it was all hard fight. The first School Board election for Carnarvon followed close on the General Election—which had been disastrous for Liberals, at Carnarvon as elsewhere. The Church party was therefore buoyant, with Dean Edwards himself as one of the candidates. Dr. Evans had been impressed into candidature, on the other side; and the two measured strength, by letters in the press, by speeches, by public influence. It is doubtful if Dr. Evans ever wrote anything wittier, more trenchant, and at the same time more convincing, than those unforgotten letters. He and his comrades fought hard and won fair, Dr. Evans heading the poll.

1874, in another way, marked an era in his life. In the 'Monthly Notes' for February, he refers to the news, just received, of the death of Dr. Livingstone. In the note he anticipates his burial in Westminster Abbey. It is evident that the man, and his end, moved him profoundly : how could it be otherwise with a born hero-worshipper?—and a lover of missionaries in particular? This little episode, given in his great missionary speech at Exeter Hall (1873), reveals the man :

Who can describe my feelings last May when I saw the face of Dr. Moffat for the first time—the face of the man whose picture had looked down upon me from the walls of my mother's home for years? How I longed to touch his hand ! and when I met him in the street one day and had the opportunity, what wonder was it that I gave his hand such a squeeze that he cried out, 'Where do you come from?' imagining, of course rightly, that I was some enthusiast from the mountains !

All through that year it is evident that he is Livingstone-haunted : and it is quite likely that his electioneering experiences had served to substantiate the evidence of his fitness for the platform. At any rate the following hint by Dr. Thomas (October 18), contained in some comments on an amusing mistake connected with a recent visit of Dr. Evans to Bristol in behalf of the local missionary

Auxiliary, shows that a lecture on Dr. Livingstone was in preparation.

One of the Tory papers has called Mr. Evans 'the Rev. E. H. Evans, from Africa.' That is something new in connection with the name of our eloquent brother. Probably the reporter thought that a man of such fine physique, and possessed of so powerful a voice, must have come from some big place; and as he did not know where he came from, he decided to connect his name with the continent of Africa as the biggest he could think of! To be sure—the 'Rev. E. Herber Evans from Africa.' For that matter, who knows but that the reporter had heard that the man was preparing to go lecturing on Dr. Livingstone, and inferred . . . that it must be someone from Africa who had undertaken to lecture on the life of the eminent adventurer?

It is corroborative of his lack of self-confidence that he must give the trial-lecture as far away from home as possible. He was preaching to a colony of his fellow-countrymen at Middlesboro', October 9-11, and on the Saturday evening, October 10, he gave to them his lecture for the first time—having finished it after arriving there. The verdict of those who heard it was unanimous; and in a fortnight's time he had returned to Morriston, to give it for his former church. There was a crowded chapel, and the proceeds amounted to over 50/. It was delivered eighty-

three times between that October 10 and May 7 next ; and was the means of clearing some 2,000*l.* of chapel debts.

It was not, except in a very limited sense, a biographical lecture. It was from first to last an oration. Its tone may be inferred from its keynote :

One man is so insignificant, so little, you may pass him twenty times a day without troubling to ask who he is : another man is so great, you are proud for ever of having seen him once. That is how I feel to-night, because I once saw Dr. Livingstone, and heard him give his last speech in Exeter Hall, in May 1865.

In dealing with 'The Boy,' he had a very impressive picture, leading to an effective passage on the responsibility of a child of pious ancestors. The picture was of Livingstone's grandfather, in the Hebrides, gathering his children around his dying bed, and telling them how he had received from his father's hands the white banner of an honest name, how he had endured hardship striving all his life long to keep it unsullied ; and now would pass it on to them unspotted—'Nor let one of you be the first to stain it !' The lecturer helped to make the picture by the use of his white handkerchief, as he proceeded to make this direct appeal :

Young men, young women, by the sweat of their brow did your parents bring you up *honestly*. The

banner of your family has not been stained yet. Your father was honest to the core, your mother as guileless as the light ; and I need not tell you they were sober, they were diligent. You are not ashamed of naming the names of your father and your mother :—good ! Do not stain the white banner of your family ; do not be the first to leave a blot on the ancient lineage. Beware of any deed that would make it impossible for a future Livingstone in your family to boast that he comes of a clean, honest stock !

He dealt with ‘The Young Man,’ driving home the lesson of self-reliance and self-improvement ; and subsequently with the Man—the Christian—the Missionary—the Philanthropist. He had an exquisite passage towards the close, where he used Dr. Livingstone’s last sentence—‘Build me a hut to die in !’—as a refrain.¹

‘*Build me a hut to die in*’ ! A hut to die in ? ‘We will do more than that,’ said his faithful followers ; ‘we will enshrine thy heart and bury it with sacred honours beneath the protecting branches of the noblest tree on the banks of Lake Bangweolo.’ Talk of relics, I would deem it worth my while to go to Africa to cut a branch from that tree that has the honour of overshadowing the heart most full of compassion that beat in a human bosom since eighteen hundred years ago.

¹ In Welsh—‘Gwnewch i mi gaban i farw’ : a phrase of the same rhythmic value as in English, but lending itself to more musical expression.

A hut to die in? 'More than that,' said Chuma and Susi and those noble youths, the first-fruits of African manhood; 'we will carry thy remains, for nine months, through a thousand miles of African perils—safe to the sea that beats on thy island-home!'—the most wonderful funeral procession the sun ever looked upon since the carrying of the bones of Joseph by Israel's host to Canaan.

A hut to die in? 'More than that,' said the waves of the ocean; 'we vow to bear the ship safely home to Southampton harbour: the *Malwa* shall have a calm voyage to bear home thy body to say to a worldly, money-loving age in Britain, with the silent eloquence of the dead, that to serve is better than to grow rich, that duty is better than dividends.'

A hut to die in? . . . Yes, the doors of Westminster Abbey, the country's sanctuary of sanctuaries, shall be opened wide to welcome thee, thy coffin lowered in a shower of wreaths from a hundred living hands—one of them from Victoria herself: thy body shall rest in peace in English earth, among the brave, the great, the good, sons of genius and kings of ages.

A hut to die in? Yes, more, far more than that—God's home for all the great-hearted and the noble of soul, to live in—to *live* in: a life that has heaven for its universe, and eternity for its time.

It was not delivered at Carnarvon till late in November. The Rev. William Pierce, who was present as a young reporter in the town, recalls it

as the greatest oratorical triumph he ever witnessed. Some of them had been dubious of his success as a lecturer, so that the triumph was all the more creditable. There were many, like himself, who could render no intelligible account of themselves during much of the latter half of the lecture: all he knew was that they found themselves, at the close, standing on the seat, waving what first came to hand, in a perfect rapture of delight.

What that lecture meant, during those two or three years, to thousands of young men—and still means—no tongue or pen can tell. It was an inspiration then: it is an inspiration still. As these words are being written, it is easy to recall him, in 1876, at the Calvinistic Methodist Chapel in Newcastle Emlyn; and one thrills yet at the memory of the ‘white banner to be handed on,’ and the ‘hut to die in’—*caban i farw!*

Apart from the public value of his lecturing period, there is no doubt that it had its own value to him. It widened the range of his eloquence, taught him to touch new chords, and helped to make him freer as a speaker, in Welsh and English.

CHAPTER IV

THE 'BIG MEETING' AND THE *CYMANFA*

IN the life of a popular Welsh preacher the 'Big Meeting' and '*Cymanfa*' loom large. The former denotes the usual chapel anniversary; but it covers two days at least—a Sunday and Monday, or a week-day evening with the whole of the next day. As in the case of the 'Heckmondwike Lecture'—to quote the only English parallel—two or three preachers will be invited to conduct the services. This custom means, by way of result, that no chapel, however small, no district, however remote, need go without becoming acquainted with the finest eloquence of the land. The shepherds' chapel in the heart of untrodden mountains, the fishermen's chapel in some world-lost bay, receives, in turn, the advantages of the largest and wealthiest town chapel. There are certain weeks of the year—following seed time and harvest home—when a preacher in demand may occupy every day, visiting district after district remote from

towns, and preaching before the week's end to an aggregate of two or three thousand people.

The *Cymanfa* properly denotes the annual gatherings for field-preaching. But the term is now somewhat more loosely used ; as, for instance, where all the churches of one denomination in a large town arrange united services. These are held annually in such towns as Liverpool, Ffestiniog, Bethesda, Merthyr, and Neath. Each church invites two preachers, and from Friday night till Sunday night—five, or perhaps six, services altogether—all the preachers move about from church to church, according to a kind of circuit plan. Often one of the most impressive of the whole series of services is the 'General Society'—a reunion of church members—that usually crowds the largest chapel. A number of brief addresses, on given topics bearing on experimental religion, is delivered by some selected half a dozen of the ministers. The Liverpool *Cymanfa* has had, in a special degree, an honourable record of famous preachers ; and it is a mark of peculiar distinction for a comparatively young minister to be invited. Dr. Evans's early fame may therefore be gauged from the fact that he preached at this *Cymanfa* in 1862, within three months of his ordination ; and he was one of the speakers at the 'General Society.' His speech was on the lines of the letter we have

already given at the close of an earlier chapter, quoting his own experience of city life with the view of guiding young men in the right way. He closed his speech, we are told, with an effective description of two paintings—the first, a mother with her child beside her, saying his evening prayer : the second, the same child, grown man, in his cell waiting the morning of his execution—brought from evening prayer to the gallows through the drinking saloon and gin-shop. Another incident, of a later date, may be given. The minister who relates it, then a young lad in Liverpool, had found his way to the ‘ Society.’ The meeting was unusually prolonged, and Dr. Thomas, who presided, had kept Dr. Evans to the last, believing—and rightly—that if the people stayed for anyone they would stay for him. However, they were getting uneasy ; and when he was called, he saw that brevity was one condition of doing anything effective. As he was mounting the pulpit-stairs, he turned round before reaching the top, and began to speak in his abrupt inimitable fashion : ‘ It is a fine sight to see a ship in the harbour, clean and taut, ready to start. On a clear day, when a ship is starting out of Holyhead harbour, and cutting its way through the first waves of the sea, the passengers on board can see the distant outline of the Irish hills, and say, “ That is the land we hope to reach ! ” We are here this

afternoon in the Society—the best place for Heaven. Some of you have had clear days, under conditions like these ; you have seen the hills of Homeland rise in outline on the far horizon, and have been able to sing of “sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,” and you have whispered as you gazed—Yonder we hope to be!’ It was all done in some five minutes, done in his perfect way ; and the audience seemed to be transformed together. They had assumed the very aspect of wistful passengers on a clearing day, watching for the first sight of land. They had all, with an unconscious movement, straightened themselves, and when the brief minutes passed, a sigh, regretful and grateful, told the effect.

But the real *Cymanfa* is at home only in the field—like the Sermon whose first word is ‘Blessed,’ preached beneath the open Syrian sky. Just as the literature and music of Wales touch their romantic note in the *Eisteddfod*, so the religion of Wales has its most picturesque, most haunting associations with the *Cymanfa*. As far as Welsh Independents are concerned—and the difference of procedure among the Free Churches in this respect is only one of details—it means the annual field-preaching festival of a county or of a group of counties. It more affects sequestered valleys than

the neighbourhood of populous towns : it takes itself away from the trunk lines of traffic, so that it may be sought out of the faithful, the unworldly, the salt of a nation's better life.

The business session of a *Cymanfa* will occupy the morning, probably ; the afternoon will be devoted to the ' Society,' or to a preaching service ; in the evening, the latter invariably. But next day is ' *the* day of the feast.' It is an unforgotten sight, in a quiet hollow among the hills, with the freshness of a June morning and the unexpected stillness of a Sabbath in the air, to watch the people coming to the seven o'clock service, down hillside, up the valley road, by meadow path and tall-hedged lane.

What if it has meant a walk of twenty miles, in the mild hours before and after the dawn of a June day ? It will be twenty miles of going from strength to strength, as the anticipation of the joyful assembly increases ; and a return journey of twenty miles that evening, with tears in the heart still gently flowing, and smiles of the soul still radiantly at play. If you ask him, the seventy-year-old pilgrim, child of the *Cymanfa*, how many has he attended, he will take you back, it may be, forty years, tell you who preached, and something of what was said then, while he may be uncertain who preached last year, or what he said. He goes, not to remember new

things however good, but to be helped to revive the memories of the past—like Old Mortality among the tombstones. They pass him, on horseback, and in genteel conveyance ; but perhaps he is the wealthiest man on the road this day, travel-stained though he be—the legatee of some of the greatest sermons of bygone days !

The seven o'clock service is not infrequently the most anointed of them all. But the great traditions gather round the ten o'clock service—the service, it will be remembered, that had kindled the hopes of the would-be boy preacher at Pen yr Herber. Let the outward scene rise into view from a local word-etching by the late Rev. Kilsby Jones :

An unusually large number of ministers was present, and the congregation consisted of several thousands. A covered platform had been erected in a field not far from the chapel for the accommodation of the ministers, from which the different speakers addressed the assembled multitude. There was a gradual ascent in the field which made it an admirable rising gallery. Into it opened several winding glens ; and the sides of the hills which crowded on us in every direction were clothed with luxuriant trees in full foliage. It was a beautiful day in June. The sun shone brightly—the winds were asleep, and nothing broke on the silence of the spot save the voice of the preacher as it echoed in the wood, and the subdued murmurs of the people as they expressed their approbation of what he advanced.

The singing also aided the general impression. It commenced on the platform, whence, as simultaneous starting was out of the question, it rolled wavelike over the congregation, on whose outskirts in the distance the strains had scarcely died away ere they were resumed by the parties who raised the tune, the custom being to repeat the stanza several times over. The man that could have preached to such an assembly and on such a spot without being roused into passion and fire must have had a soul of ice and a heart of stone.¹

Let anyone who ever saw him and heard him place Dr. Evans in the midst of such a scene, facing such an audience, and he will understand what he signified to Welsh religious life during the years of his strength, from 1865 to 1879. His physique, his voice, the cast of his sermon, his entire personality, all combined to make his position supreme. Under such conditions a manuscript would be worse than useless ; nor is too new a sermon, irreproachable though it be in its primal stiffness, a wise experiment. Well tried it had better be, pliable, ready to give and take, swiftly moving from thought to thought, and gathering force up to the very last. Sensitive as he ever was to his environment, he gave himself to the occasion. A local allusion, a colloquial saying, a picture

¹ From the *Homilist* : quoted in *Echoes from the Welsh Hills*, p. 372.

vividly drawn,¹ an incident of the week uppermost in people's minds—they were all made subject to the preacher's theme, and fused by his eloquence into a glowing whole. There were times when he suffered comparative failure: but the number of his triumphant occasions would redeem the fame of any half a dozen men. Let a few episodes, culled from those great years, be taken to suggest his power and his influence.

One of his earliest appearances was also one of the most picturesque of his life—at his own native town of Newcastle Emlyn, in 1867. His kith and kin were among the thousands present—including his grandfather from Pen yr Herber, nearing his eightieth year. And the Rev. John Williams was there—no one imagining that he was within two years of death—at the age of fifty; he was that day presented with a public testimonial, and it was formally handed to him by Jonah Evans. So grandfather and grandson met on the same platform that June day, and who can tell how much the young preacher's eloquent sermon owed to the old blacksmith's faithful prayers, morning and evening, in the house on the hill three miles

¹ Writing to him (August 22, 1876), in view of his prospective speech at Bradford, Dr. Hannay said: 'You will have no difficulty with the "Principles"—make pictures of them after your fashion.'

away? An auditor in the crowd, writing thirty years later, said :

After the usual brief introductory service a young man of noble and commanding presence, in outward appearance the embodiment of health and strength, with a pleasant smile, which seems to well out from his azure eyes, lighting up his broad features, appears in front of the 'stage,' and is the one figure on which all eyes are set. The silence is intense. The hand plays trumpet to every ear to catch the first words that proceed from his lips—'Seek Him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into morning, and maketh the day dark with night : that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth : the Lord is His name'. . . . The flow of oratory is superb, the speaker has his sonorous, silvery voice under perfect control, and ascends from elevation to elevation until the audience lose sight of every earthly object save the animated features of the speaker ; who seems, like the prophet he is, swept along by the force of his own inspiration. It was magnificent—a scene that defies time to efface it from the memory.

Two years later, he was preaching some ten miles away, at Pencader, and once again one who was present as a boy—the Rev. Talwyn Phillips, B.D., Bala—shall, in his own way, tell us what happened to one hearer—an '*auld licht*,' surely !

Listening to Herber at the ten o'clock service in this *Cymanfa* was a godly old pilgrim, John Williams by

name. He was by trade a miller. In all that country-side there was no more transparent character. The sight of him was a terror to the ungodly. He was an excellent Scripturer, and the best theologian of the district. His ideal preacher was the preacher of dry good sense. He could enjoy dry sermons. He would praise sermons that were too dry for anyone else to have aught to do with them. He did not believe that there was any need for truth to be shouted, nor for the Gospel to be adorned with striking stories. The old miller went to the *Cymanfa* in a brand-new suit, made specially for the great festival. Herber was preaching at the ten o'clock service. He was on 'the high places of the field.' His nature was full of spiritual electricity. He illustrated the Gospel by parable and allegory till the prejudice of the old miller against a striking story in a sermon vanished to the four winds. He has lost himself in pious delight. There are treasures of the Gospel coming into light for the first time which he never saw before ; the preacher is like an inspired prophet showing them and explaining them. During the sermon, a heavy shower of rain fell on the congregation in the field. But there was one in the congregation who knew nothing of the shower till it was past. It was the old miller. When the sermon is finished, and he has had time to breathe, to his astonishment he finds his new suit wet all over, and he asks excitedly, 'Who has been splashing water on my clothes?' He was not aware that the God of Nature had been raining upon his body, while the God of Grace had been distilling His gracious rain upon his soul.

Another memorable scene is connected with a *Cymanfa* at Aberayron, on the Cardiganshire sea coast, in 1874. He had preached at the morning service, and was preaching again, first in the evening. Many people had ridden or driven about twenty and even thirty miles, and these were preparing to return homewards as the evening service began. Dr. Evans had commenced preaching, and the conveyances could be seen, from the field, the whole length of the road leading up and out from the town. At first nothing strange happened, but as his voice grew stronger and more sonorous, the nearest conveyance stopped, and the magic spell wrought on, further and further, till it was laid on the very furthest that could be seen, nearly a mile away. No sound of wheel or hoof was audible till his last sentence had rung out clear and died away, and then the spell was broken and the silent cavalcade began slowly to move and disappear one by one. He had, by virtue of his eloquence, 'joined himself' to each 'chariot.'

Among the latest of his 'Monthly Notes' is one dealing with the question, 'Which was the happiest hour of your life?' based on a chapter in Otto Funcke's 'How to be Happy and make others Happy.' After the publication of the Note (November 1896) he received the following :

I believe I am indebted to you, by the grace of God, for the 'best hour of my life,' viz. under your sermon in the field at Llandilo, in 1878; and I also believe that my eternity will be better on its account. May the Lord uphold you a long while to do great good!

All these episodes are connected with one part of the country: were one to ask in Merioneth and Montgomery, in Carnarvon and Anglesey, in Flint and Denbigh, the tale of similar incidents and impressions could be much prolonged. But one scene in Anglesey, the materials for describing which have been supplied us by Mr. Hugh Williams, Bangor, claims precedence. It describes what was probably his first appearance at a *Cymanfa* in the island: and it is located at Llangefni, in 1868—an historic place in connection with such assemblies. Mr. Williams dined with Dr. Evans, if dinner could be properly applied to the scanty meal he made, in spite of ample provisions. He excused himself, and went upstairs. They thought he had forgotten the time, and when one went to remind him he was overheard quietly, solemnly conversing with the Lord of assemblies.

The morning audience had been large; it was much larger in the calm and sunny afternoon. As soon as the prayer was done, we could see Mr. Herber

Evans quickly rise and approach the provisional pulpit. He reads for his text: 'Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.' (James v. 11). Some were there to listen out of curiosity, others in a critical mood; for many at that time would have it that he owed all his popularity to his voice; though many more were convinced already that there was none like him, as an all-round preacher, in Wales. His introduction is short, lively, and clear: and now he seems to grasp his theme in earnest. His spirit is more subduing than his words—notwithstanding that rushing speech of his—and the influence spreads among the audience. The 'living thing' is clearly perceived in the revolutions of 'the wheels.' Now the sermon is nearing its climax: every seat, on the platform and in the field, is vacant; every eye and ear seem nailed to the preacher. Responses multiply, and grow more rapturous. The words of the text, repeated as a melodious refrain once and again, cannot have ceased ringing in many ears to this day. The sermon seemed a perfect whole, both in matter and in delivery—a radiant flight of consolations! The scene on the stage, for the last ten minutes of the sermon, would have made a sacred living picture not easy to match. The scores of ministers and others on the stage, all standing and eagerly stretching forward to see as well as hear the young evangelist, and see the congregation, too, overcome with the all-subduing eloquence; the immortal Hiraethog [Dr. Wm. Rees], on the one side, and the

revered William Griffith, of Holyhead, on the other side, in their patriarchal guise like an Aaron and a Hur, doing their utmost to hold up the arms of their Moses. And we all knew from that day that the preacher was far more than his marvellous voice.

* * * *

Among those who had come to the *Cymanfa* that morning was a Calvinistic Methodist elder, who had been sorely afflicted: his wife and only daughter had died suddenly within a few days of each other. He had often been a comforter of others in distress, but could not now take what he had given. 'The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me,' was his cherished conviction. More than once that morning, on his way, he had stopped and turned his face homewards: what blessing could there be for him? But he struggled on; and in the *Cymanfa* field found the wheel of a cart to lean upon. The morning service brought no healing balm;—surely, it was of no use; let him take his way homeward. But still, no: he had better hear the much-talked-of stranger, in the afternoon. Once more he stood beside the old cart-wheel: when he heard the words of the text, he was startled, as if a new Bible had just been found. There could be no doubt of it—that sermon was *his*, and no one else's: and long before it was done he could bless the Lord and the sermon, and every gift human and Divine that had helped him to read Providence anew. And one man, among the many, left that field, seeing the end of the Lord, and almost able to

repeat steadily: 'The Lord is very pitiful, and full of mercy!'

The freshest of these reminiscences is more than twenty-two years ago; and it is not an easy thing for a preacher to say a thing so well that after twenty, and after thirty years, the memory of it still gathers rapture.

CHAPTER V

A WIFE'S DIARY

AT the coming in of the year 1875 Mrs. Evans—moved by a new impulse that assumes, in the light of what happened, the mysteriousness of a presentiment—decided to keep a diary. Something of the greyness of the years has touched its pages and dimmed the handwriting, but the simple phrases of a good wife's gentle heart are in it, unaged and unaging. They have no need to be explained nor in any way to be excused ; the dewy light in which they will be read by others besides myself is enough. They give us glimpses of her husband's mode of life and his quick-changing moods ; and, better still, they modestly reveal common days adorned with the natural piety and Christly converse of a good woman, who had

A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love was innocent.

They were written in English, with an occasional word in Welsh for homely emphasis.

JANUARY

I never kept a diary except the few months I travelled in France with my dear father ; but I've often of late wished I could express my thoughts more clearly. I wonder if this will help me !

What a happy, pleasant, and prosperous year 1874 has been to me ! How tenderly my Heavenly Father has dealt with me ! Oh, my God and my dear Jesus ! be Thou with me every day, every hour, and every minute of 1875 : help me to control my temper, be more kind and loving toward all that are dear to me and those who are dependent upon me ; to live a more consistent life before my husband, child, and servants. I believe I could go through a great trouble bravely ; but it is these small troubles and petty annoyances ! Help me to battle resolutely against all evil that I feel would conquer me. Search me, O my God ! I am willing for Thee to search me—Thou wilt not take advantage of my weakness : but let me always feel that my Heavenly Father is either pleased or grieved by my behaviour ; and whatever I do, let me do all to Thy glory.

1st, *Friday*.—Very cold and windy. Mr. E. at Holyhead. Succeeded in releasing him from an engagement on the 19th at Turf Square Chapel, so that he may spend next Sunday at Pontselly.

2nd, *Saturday*.—Much warmer. E. came home from Holyhead with a cold and very tired.

4th, *Monday*.—Very windy, wet, but not cold. . . .
'Higher holiness always brings with it higher sensibility.'
—*Parker*.

5th, *Tuesday*.—Evan left by the half-past five [A.M.] train for St. David's, Pembrokeshire. He was very low: all these accidents help to make even a strong man nervous. Received a telegram about a quarter to eight from Haverfordwest; he arrived quite safe; how thankful I feel! Lizzie very lively and so old-fashioned. Little servant very sick, thought she was going to have the scarlet fever. Mother spent the afternoon with us.

8th, *Friday*.—Very fine day. . . . About two, mother came up, told me John James Hughes was very ill; boy, come to help to write bills, told me he was dead. How sad! About a month ago he was here looking so handsome and well, and telling me that E. must not work so hard—that he was in danger of breaking down. And that fine-looking fellow who sat *in that chair*, warning me, is gone! Where?

10th, *Sunday*.—E. preached twice. Three young men to 'Society.'

11th, *Monday*.—Rather wet. E. answered about fifteen letters—went out about half-past three, School Board meeting.

12th, *Tuesday*.—E. left this morning for Merthyr: will not return until Saturday morning. May he return safely! These awful railway accidents shake my faith—almost—in Providence. But we

Must do our best and leave the rest
To God's Almighty ruling.

13th, *Wednesday*.—The first thing I saw when I came down was E.'s picture fallen on the sofa; the chain had

snapped. Did not feel comfortable. How superstitious one is after all!—Telegram about half-past three; he is quite well; and I am now quite cheerful.

14th, *Thursday*.—No letter. Went out, saw old G. P. How childlike and happy he appeared! I fear, if I live to be old, I would be a burden to all: so now I don't think I should like it. How beautiful it is to see a cheerful, good-tempered, aged man or woman! there is naught to cheer them but He who hath said:—*Mewn henaint a phenllwydni Myfi a fyddaf gyda thi* ('When thou art old and grey-headed I will be with thee').¹

15th, *Friday*.—Two letters from E.—*almost love-letters*; one written from Builth, where I first heard him preach in August, 1863. God has been good to us all these years—Oh, how thankful I ought to be!

16th, *Saturday*.—E. returned home safe and well, and found us well also, tho' the scarlet fever is raging among us—ever so many little ones dying. Oh! for a heart to praise the Lord for all His goodness to us. Help me, O Lord, to live better!

18th, *Monday*.—All well. E. was up before eight, and in his study answering letters. Mrs. E—— and little girl came to tea. I like Mrs. E——, a nice sensible little woman. Does anybody ever think so of me, I wonder? I often think myself a poor wife and doubt whether I have any *rhinwedd* ('virtue'). I try not to

¹ Her memory has misquoted Psalm lxxi. 18: her faith has changed a prayer into a promise. Surely such revisions please the Father of mercies!

commit blunders, and that sometimes is difficult. E. very tired.

19th, *Tuesday*.—E. left for Nevin by half-past nine train. Went to see mamma, found her ill in bed : stayed with her until half-past three. . . . Sorry to leave mother alone ; feel very lonely and nervous ; don't like being alone so much ; but a wife must not be a drag upon her husband.

20th, *Wednesday*.—Had a nasty attack of nervousness last night : conquered it alone.

24th, *Sunday*.—Very good Sunday : seven came to 'Society.'

25th, *Monday*.—E. at home, bad.

26th, *Tuesday*.—E. left for Conway . . . complained of a headache. Very cold. Mother much better, spent the afternoon with me.

28th, *Thursday*.—E. came home quite ill : bad cold, out of sorts. Poor fellow ! and so much work before him next week.

29th, *Friday*.—E. a little better ; worked hard in the study from eleven till three, preparing for Liverpool : pouring rain. He must leave by the four o'clock train for Llandudno to lecture to-night : far from well. Who would envy a public man ? Popularity is a burthen.

30th, *Saturday*.—E. came home by half-past nine : far from well. . . . Left by the four o'clock train for Liverpool. . . . I was sorry to see him go. God will take care of him ; he is doing a noble work.

FEBRUARY

1st, *Monday*.—Not well.

2nd, *Tuesday*.—Much the same. Servant ill with bad sore throat: hope she is not going to have the scarlet fever.

3rd, *Wednesday*.—E. sent a letter and small parcel from Chester, and a brace of snipe. How thoughtful and kind!

5th, *Friday*.—A letter from E. ; he is much better. How thankful I feel! I suppose all these little anxieties do us good; we then feel how little we can do, and are compelled to trust to a higher Power; and how sweet and soothing the thought that that One is our Father!

6th, *Saturday*.—E. returned by one o'clock train from Aberystwyth; *very well* indeed, all things considered.

8th, *Monday*.—Have 100*l.* in the bank. I little thought of this last September, when I gave one little extra pound in the collection, just because we had been spared a heavy doctor's bill for two years. It was very little I had to offer, but He has literally blessed it a hundredfold in a short *three months*. Surely He hath done this: for He gave my husband health and strength to speak.

9th, *Tuesday*.—E. home, bright and happy, by half-past nine A.M. 'Society' at Salem; William Pierce, a young man who is anxious to enter the ministry, is to preach his first sermon. May God help and bless him to-night and always, and make him a good and earnest

minister of Jesus Christ, and may Salem be proud of him in future years !

10th, *Wednesday*.—Pierce passed off well last night. E. off to Machynlleth to lecture.

‘ It is certain that God knows how best to make up His jewels.’

Gentle and loving rebuke is always mighty.

If you would be strong, you must be calm.

11th, *Thursday*.—Home again, rather tired. The friends at Machynlleth cleared over 60*l.* from the Lecture. Platform tickets 5*s.* Many Church people present. Popularity is slowly and dearly bought.

Little drops of water,
Little grains of sand,
Make the mighty ocean
And the bounteous land.

14th, *Sunday*.—Good Sunday.

15th, *Monday*.—E. painfully anxious about the concert. . . . Concert passed off well : Town Hall crowded. Well done, Salem !

17th, *Wednesday*.—Went out after dinner, called with two or three poor people ; felt very cold.

18th, *Thursday*.—Mrs. Howel Evans was buried ; who next from Salem ? God alone knows. Bitterly cold ; E. far from well ; looked very pale at the funeral.

20th, *Saturday*.—Much snow. Sad news this morning : poor Richard Owen, Tŷ Capel, killed at Penmaenmawr ; poor fellow, how suddenly ! I believe he is safe. Another from Salem.

23rd, *Tuesday*.—‘ Materialism is deficient in compass ; it cannot comprehend the whole case : its analysis of a

leaf is admirable, but it is lost amidst the secrets of the heart. It creates more mysteries than it removes, and in the long run aggravates itself into the greatest mystery of all.'—*The Paraclete*.

27th, Saturday.—Came down to the parlour first time since Monday. How cold this house is in winter ; not one room in which you can sit without draught.

So her entries in the diary abruptly close—with the cold of winter in the house. And when next we come upon written pages in the diary we find another colder wind than that of winter blowing—against which no door was ever securely closed.

CHAPTER VI

‘JENNY’

THE pages are blank all through March and April ; but as we open May’s first pages, we find familiar handwriting—but another’s.

Sunday, May 9th.—This is the first Sabbath I have been in the house without preaching, since I am in the ministry ; and what a sad one it is ! My darling Jenny is very ill since last Wednesday morning ; and this day we find out that it is *scarlet fever*.

How very sad we all are ! I went a part of the way to chapel, but Mr. G. Pritchard and Mr. Howel Evans met me with the Dr., and they all advised me to return. How I did cry ! I saw the tears of sympathy in poor Griffith’s eye, and it at once touched me. How open to sympathy we all are, and what a cheap thing it is ! We could all give more of it and make other people’s burdens much lighter. The strongest want it, and the weakest can give it. Let me try to give more of it.

After returning to the house I did not know what to do to forget my anxiety. I came across this Diary of my dear Wife, and I have read it with great pleasure. How kind and loving she is—and how good ! And yet I can hear her now, as I write, moaning with pain.

How mysterious Providence is! We had arranged all to start for London to-morrow, where I was to speak for the Home and Colonial Missionary Societies. How very strange that I should be stopped going!—my two speeches were ready and I think likely to do good: but evidently God has some purpose which must be better still: what can it be? I am writing now my heart's feeling—on this strange day in my life.

Mrs. Edwards has just come to inject food. . . .

I do not feel that God will take her from me now—and yet my tears trickle with fear as I write. I am like all strong hearty men, not very brave in trial, but full of fear, especially when others are suffering. Oh! may God bless the food now given to her! The great danger is her breaking down through extreme weakness.

So closes the entry in the diary for that 'strange day.' When we turn the page, the date is written in—'Saturday, May 15th.' On that day he wrote, in Welsh, the following prose elegy, which appeared in the *Dysgedydd* for the month of June, and which now takes its place here, in translated phrases—takes its place, as no other words could.

'JENNY'

I feel strongly that in this world things can be felt but once: you cannot recall impressions.—F. W. ROBERTSON: 'LIFE.'

Many emotions come speeding through my mind to-day, which I am anxious not to lose: so they must

be seized and chained with pen and ink. It is Saturday, the day before the Sabbath. A fortnight to-day, my family were all well in my home, and I was preparing a sermon upon the sweet words ‘For God so loved the world’ (John iii. 16). My beloved wife warned me that the text must make the sermon commonplace, that she had never heard one worthy sermon on the verse; and after I had preached she remarked, with her usual honesty, that I too, like others, had failed.

How different to-day this house is, and the scene through the window, from what it was that Saturday morning! Someone now goes past whistling: in the town there is an important fair. I hear the murmuring sound of the crowd from afar; I see the boat bringing load after load of light-hearted ones from Anglesey, across the Menai, to the fair. The month of May has clothed the trees, the hedge, and the flowers before the house, in their robes of glory. Two birds sing in the bush in front of my study, and I think I can hear a note of joy in the lay of one, and a note of regret in the song of the other. Perhaps it is my fancy: but who knows?

And one is glad; her note is gay,
 For now her little ones have ranged;
 And one is sad: her note is changed,
 Because her brood is stol’n away.

At any rate there is something in the cry of that bird very different, as it falls on my feeling, from the whistling of the boy that went past ten minutes ago. My nest, too, has been scattered this week. My Jenny

sleeps beside her father and her little Winnie, at Llanbeblig, and my only child is on a sick bed in her grandmother's house. Fron Deg, where I have spent the happiest years of my life, is mournfully, painfully silent to-day.

To see the vacant chair, and think
How good ! how kind ! and she is gone.

Died in the month of May ! I was afraid of losing her, every winter : I knew that consumption had overcome some of her nearest relatives, and the flush on her own two cheeks was like the premonitory banner of the same disease, hung out for years, and on it legible to all that loved her—*I will not let thee go !* But I used to feel safe every year after March was gone, and especially after crossing the threshold of May. May !—life everywhere—in all the fields, and river meadows, and groves—yea, even the mountain-tops crowned with life ! The cradle of life hiding from sight the grave of every grief—the Great Creator having breathed the breath of life to all the earth's red soil, and every leaf to the tip of the topmost branch of every tree, a colony of life ! To die in the month of May ?—that was impossible a week ago. To descend into the grave in cold December, or bleak January, or March and its blighting hoar-frost—that was to fear ; but in May ? No, London in May !—the month of the missionary anniversaries, the month when the Christian tribes from Dan to Beersheba gather together to hear the glad tidings of great joy about the immovable Kingdom—the month when battalion after battalion of the *one* great army of the Lamb is called

together to receive cheer for work done, and receive fresh marching orders from the Great Commander to bless all the earth in His name. Yes, London in May ! ‘We will go too’ ; we shall hear Sankey sing ‘Safe in the arms of Jesus,’ and Moody picture ‘Jesus of Nazareth passing by,’ before we return. We shall see the faces of loving and beloved friends from every part, coming ‘to the Feast’ ; and we shall visit places made sacred by former visits. We had purposed also to do some little good ourselves, by addressing the great congregation. The speeches are in the drawer, the sermons are ready, and everything in trim—for London on Monday ! But alas, alas ! As we surrounded the family altar on Thursday morning, the first words read were ‘Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.’ No one felt that there was anything premonitory in them, at the time ; but we all remember them now as the last words read when the family met entire. Two hours later, Jenny had been obliged to retire to bed ; and by Friday morning the storm had gathered fury so that every intention of going up to London was cast overboard. But still, no one yet thought there was danger of dying in May ; no, winter to die in—everything in summer lives !

I was obliged to leave on Saturday evening to lecture : or else our patient would have believed there was danger, and the doctor assured us there was none at all. The morning of the Lord’s Day the *scarlet fever* had shown itself, and the sufferer at once felt she was too weak to fight with it. She understood her constitution well :

but although she had battled with many an illness, she said, several times, during Sunday that 'there was no discharge in this war.' And on Monday morning, about the time of the departure of the first train from the town for London, a chariot from another Metropolis came, not to the station but to the house—to the Fron Deg¹—to fetch Jenny thither : and she had reached the journey's end hours before she expected to arrive in London. The dress she had thought of for the anniversaries of the metropolis was ready, and without a doubt the 'white robe' for the heavenly Jerusalem was also ready. She had expected to meet beloved friends in the earthly metropolis, but more excellent company awaited her in the heavenly Metropolis :—her dear father, who had parted with her in the midst of strangers in France, February 11, 1864 ; her aunt Mrs. Davies (formerly of Catharine Street, Liverpool), and her cousin Annie. Many a pleasant week they spent together at Trefriw ; but it was pain and ill-health that brought them there every summer ; nevertheless, Trefriw, to a little group so content, so happy, so interested, was a delightful place, in spite of all ill-health ; but they have now met in Paradise, and everyone is well in that land. 'And there shall be no more pain.' 'And death shall be no more.'

Death is here, as Mrs. Hemans sang, at all seasons—death even in the month of May ! The leaves of the wood have their time of falling, and the flowers of the garden their time of fading, and the stars of heaven their time of setting ; but O Death ! thou art the dark king of

¹ The name might be translated 'Sunnyside.'

all the seasons ! Thou hast quenched the light of my home as the long summer’s day began—thou hast clothed every May for me henceforth with mourning. One of our comforters asked us when we were weeping bitterly : ‘ Would you wish to have her back ? ’ I answered without hesitation : ‘ I would ; and more than that, I believe she would return from the midst of the bliss of Paradise to the midst of earth’s ill-health, in order to be a help to lead her husband and child back with her.’ I was very selfish, in the bitterness of my grief, to wish to have her return ; but I still believe that she is unselfish enough to sacrifice heaven for a few years—though she would feel like Paul that it ‘ is far better,’ yet ‘ for your sakes ’ she would have stayed—she would return to assist us ; and if my Heavenly Father were to grant me a guardian angel for my lifetime, I would never wish for a better than she.

I feared many a time to lose her sooner, and I am thankful for her comradeship for nearly ten years. No one knows, but He who gave her, how indebted to her I am, and ever shall be.

I hold it truth, whate’er befall,
I feel it when I sorrow most : ‘
’Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

I can with truth say, ‘ My purposes are broken off.’ My life’s column is shattered in two. I have a grave for my purposes in my heart henceforth, as well as a grave for my beloved ones in Llanbeblig ; and every one of us in time comes to own a sepulchre of broken intentions in his bosom, as well as own a grave for his divided

family in the churchyard. As Parker has said : ‘ Purposes !—that is poetry : broken !—that is history. ‘ Purposes ’—that is to-morrow : ‘ broken ’—that is to-day. This world is full of purposes and intentions scattered and shattered.

I have earnestly prayed to know the wish of the Lord : He has shaken me as with an earthquake. And I tremblingly ask, ‘ What will Thou have me to do ? ’ The alarm has sounded till the depths of my soul are awake, and I now hearken for the new commission. The trial is so contrary to my feeling and expectation, that I cannot *perceive* anything right in it ; but I bow and confess : It must be perfectly right, because it is the Lord who hath done this ! *It would be impossible to be content for any one to do this, but Him.* I can use a sentence from the letter of one of my friends : ‘ I cannot yet comprehend the purpose of the darkest dispensation I ever met, but I am helped in this storm to cast anchors out, and *wish for the day.*’ I can now say, ‘ Not night, not night ! ’ but I must confess that I also whisper ‘ Not day, not day ! ’¹—and I too ‘ wish for the day.’ Tennyson says that

Men may rise on stepping stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.

A fiery temptation has, before now, entirely and for ever deadened the man as he was, and he has thenceforth used his ‘ dead self ’ as a stepping stone to climb towards ‘ higher things.’ That is the only way in which a great

¹ A refrain in one of his sermons, heard on many a *cymmanfa* field.

loss can become a greater gain. But one may rightly ask, notwithstanding, who can

So forecast the years
And find in loss a gain to match ?
Or reach a hand thro’ time to catch
The far-off interest of tears ?

It is a great thing to believe immovably that there *is* interest and profit to come from our tears and trials, not in the next world, but in this life. And it is a solemn thing to lose our loved ones and lose the lesson also.

I shall never forget May 10, 1875. It was filled from edge to edge with ‘bitter bitterness’ to me. About six in the morning Jenny lifted her two thin hands, and hinted her *Good-bye* ! when too weak to say a word. After a long day, the longest I ever spent, I was called from my bed, eleven o’clock at night, to go to Pool Street—my dear Lizzie seemed about to follow her mother. I left the house and the dead, to go and bid farewell to the living ; but when I reached my mother-in-law’s house, my child did not know her father, and someone whispered as I entered, ‘She will not be here much longer.’ I could well understand that night how men’s hair could turn grey in a few hours.

I see, by this time, the great wisdom of my Heavenly Father in taking my child to the gates of death, when I thought things could not be worse with me, and giving her back to me again—as I greatly hope now—that I may mingle thanksgivings with my tears. But my heart yet bleeds under the pruning-knife of the Heavenly Vine-dresser. I hope He is ‘purging me that I may bring

forth more fruit' (John xv. 2). There is a profound saying, in one of Robertson's letters, that comes to my mind often these days : 'It is probable that the great principle is universal in this world, that we can only heal one another with blood.' The greatest Sufferer—the Man of Sorrows—is this world's greatest Healer ; and it may be true that the greatest sufferers of every age are its chief healers. I used to envy my dear Jenny her power to heal, but it was the profit of many an illness ; she too had been perfected in this power through suffering. But last Monday morning we watched her suffering the last *pang* for ever, and that morning she gave me the first *trial* she ever gave me—in leaving me. Her hand was growing cold in my hand for an hour. At last she made a sign for everyone else to leave the room, and she asked me to pray. 'Don't be excited,' she whispered ; and then—'I shall see you *there* : bring Lizzie with you.' Amen.

She was a wise, bright, loveable woman ; true maker of a home, and at the same time a devoted helper of her husband's ministry. She had cultured tastes ; and her piety had about it much of the 'beauty of holiness.' She was not afraid of gently and wisely correcting her husband, and even modestly criticising his sermons. She kept her reverence for sacred things, in the midst of the anxieties and temptation of a popular preacher's life. One Sunday evening, a little before service time, she opened his study door suddenly and un-

thinkingly, and found him on his knees in earnest prayer. She felt sore, for a long while after, that she had trespassed upon his communion with God. ‘He looked,’ she said, ‘as if I had caught him doing something wrong; it was I who had done wrong in forgetting how solemn is the preacher’s office.’ She never again approached that door without a feeling of shyness.

He seemed, for weeks after her death, as if he might altogether break down; and he certainly injured himself in retreating too much into his trouble. There is no blessing in the House of Sorrow, except on the threshold, as one leaves it, to take up life’s task again. He was to have preached the sermon of the Union of Welsh Independents that summer at Holywell. In yielding to become his substitute, Dr. Thomas wrote to him, kindly but faithfully (July 1, 1875): ‘I am very sorry your feelings continue to be broken and troubled. I know you have suffered irrecoverable loss; yet you must hearten yourself to do your work; and I believe the Lord has great work for you yet to do for Him, and that the dispensation you have met is sure to fit you to do it better. I am glad you are going to Treorky, and I think you would come to possess yourself sooner if you mingled more with your brethren.’

And so he did. He plunged himself in work, travelling, preaching, lecturing, more assiduously

than ever. He had refuge in his mother-in-law's kindness, and comfort in watching his daughter's growth. She came soon to take her place as one of the Divine joys of his life, and continued so to the end.

CHAPTER VII

THE ANCHORAGE TESTED

IT was not to be expected that a man of his gifts and rapidly widening popularity should be left undisturbed in a sphere comparatively limited, as Carnarvon was. There were Welsh churches with larger possibilities—such as Capel Als, Llanelly, and Grove Street, Liverpool—whose pastorate was offered to him. The offer from Grove Street Church came to him in July 1875, while he was still in death's unlifted shadow: but although he nearly yielded to go, he stayed on.

The English pulpit, placed in a vaster world as it is, afforded opportunities still more attractive. His success as an English preacher is all the more surprising when we consider under what disabilities he suffered. The language was a learnt language to him: and his surroundings and associations, up to the age of eighteen, were entirely Welsh. In his 'Bible Society' speech (May 1878), he interpolates this bit of experience: 'It is impossible for you to realise what it must be for a Welshman

who always thinks, speaks, and preaches in Welsh to go through the same process in English.' It was difficult to remove the impression from even the well-informed English mind that his ministry was not somehow half-English. The late Dr. Berry, inviting him to his Sunday School Anniversary at Bolton, in 1877, offers to exchange pulpits for the day, adding in a saving postscript : 'Of course in offering to preach for you I am taking it for granted that you have English as well as Welsh services. For, though my father is a Wrexham man, I must plead my ignorance of the Welsh tongue.'

It seems well to explain all this, that the cost of his English labours may be rightly estimated. And it is but fair to add that, excepting some rare occasions, his most effective English efforts were not equal to his best in Welsh. Of what he achieved he could well say, 'With a great sum obtained I this freedom.'

But, in spite of initial difficulties, his eloquence overcame everything, and between 1873 and 1877 he was assiduously sought after. Perhaps the earliest inquiry was from the church at Bishopsgate, in May 1873. He had, some time before, occupied the pulpit; and when the pastorate became vacant, the secretary wrote to him to say that a lively remembrance of his 'robust preaching' had led them as deacons to place his name

THE ANCHORAGE TESTED 161

first. In the same year he was approached on behalf of Percy Chapel, Bath, and Queen Street, Brighton—the latter just vacant through the removal of Paxton Hood.

But what tested the anchorage most severely so far, was the invitation he received in 1874 to Westminster Chapel, to be co-pastor with Samuel Martin. When he, at the first, expressed doubts of his fitness, Mr. Martin replied: 'I built this chapel; I love it better than I love you. So you may be sure it is because I believe you are fit for the place that I ask you.' Then he added, 'You deal in wares which are not much sold here, but which the people demand.'¹ A call immediately followed; and as his reply has biographical value, reflecting contrary emotions and impulses as it does, we will insert it here. There is no date attached to the document, as I have it, but it was sent the last week of March 1874:

My dear Mr. de Selincourt,—After you left on Saturday I could do absolutely nothing in the way of preparation for Sunday—the great question you laid before me absorbed all my time and all my thoughts. As Mrs. Evans told you, owing to my absence from home and other pressing duties, we had had no time to look seriously at the question in all its bearings. . . . I look upon it as the greatest crisis in my life; and when

¹ 'Claudius Clear' in *British Weekly*, April 5, 1889.

you consider that the whole thing came upon me so unexpectedly, that I had no idea of removing from my present sphere when I came to London, and that the request to consider the question of an invitation to the co-pastorate of such a large and important church as yours was so strange and so important, I really think that a month or more ought to be allowed for earnest prayer and deep reflection upon the whole question. I had never felt any inclination whatever to remove from Carnarvon until I came to Westminster Chapel; there were many considerations that drew my whole nature towards that splendid sphere of usefulness. On the other hand, the rumour of the probability of my leaving Wales has brought forth such a torrent of kind remonstrances not only from my own congregation, but from the whole town, and especially from my brother ministers in North Wales, that it has caused me not only to hesitate, but to feel convinced that I ought not to leave at present. I assure you that I was not aware that my work here was so appreciated, and that my loss would be so generally and deeply felt. I prayed much that the Lord would lead me to a right decision, and when I saw the manifestation of grief and feeling in all my friends and the friends of the Lord's work, I feared to move before the leading cloud. That would be most serious to you as well as to me.

He was earnestly urged to reconsider, but he remained firm in refusing. The Rev. R. Thomas, Bala, penning a note—*sub judice*—in the *Dysgedydd*

for April 1874, wrote: 'I strongly expect our brother will see that the Master has great work for him yet to fulfil in Wales; and that he will be inclined, in studying the matter, to remain in "Wild Wales," and wear out his days among the crested mountains of his native land, and that the "Big Meeting" and the *Cymanfa* shall enjoy his ministry, and that the *Dysgedydd* and other periodicals shall be enriched with the product of his pen for very many years yet. His country, with one voice, tells him, "Stay at home, my son."'

The next test of purpose came in 1876, from Harecourt Chapel. He had preached here and at Stamford Hill—the two churches being at the time under the dual ministry of Dr. Raleigh and Henry Simon—on the Missionary Sunday in May 1873. In 1875 Dr. Raleigh removed to Kensington, and he was asked to supply the pulpit for two Sundays in January 1876. He came, and 'cleared everything before him,' as Mr. Simon wrote him a few days later; adding, 'I am so glad that you have not hindered them. I hope you will have a unanimous and pressing invitation. Should you see your way to accept it, a congregation is certain. May the dear God guide you in His own right way for His own name's sake!'

The invitation came; and two of the deacons, Mr. Gage Spicer and Mr. Frederick Fitch, met

him at Brecon. The following letter, written from Neath to his mother-in-law, immediately after the interview, shows in what cross-currents he once more found himself :

. . . I have just come from Brecon to this place, and I have only time to write a few lines before the post leaves. I was obliged to act as chairman at the committee in Brecon yesterday, and was busy all day. In the evening I was obliged to go to meet the London friends and I have been in a terrible anxiety about my duty. They pressed me to go with all their power. They offer to pay the debt of Salem, Carnarvon, and to pay all my expenses of removal to London, besides the salary. I am afraid they are more anxious to get me than the Carnarvon people are to keep me, except you and Lizzie. I am very sorry that you are so unwilling for me to accept such a splendid offer, when my work at Carnarvon seems to be finished. Many things seem to say that I ought to go—and yet, because I thought of you, I have not promised to go. They have given me a few days more to consider. . . . Try to pray for me to act right. They are all praying in London to get me, and you ought to pray there that God may show me my duty.

I send you my very kind love.

Your Son,

EVAN H. EVANS.

The sequel is explained by the following minute of a church meeting held at Harecourt, March 29, 1876 :

THE ANCHORAGE TESTED 165

Messrs. Fitch and Spicer, who had gone as deputation to the Rev. E. Herber Evans in accordance with the minute of February 23, gave an account of their interview with him, and the following reply to the call which they had presented on behalf of the church was read :

The Deacons of Harecourt Chapel

Carnarvon : March 20, 1876.

Dear Brethren,—After many days of intense anxiety, consultation with friends, and sincere prayer to my Heavenly Father, I have come to the decision not to remove from my present sphere of labour. I believe that Almighty God has led to this final determination. I know that I am making a great personal sacrifice, when I consider the honour you offered me of being pastor of one of our first churches, the position of a London minister, the noble sphere of labour, and a salary exactly four times my present one : all these advantages weighed in favour of accepting your call ; but the leanings of my own heart have whispered, I believe, the will of the Master that I should stay : and the only explanation of the sacrifice I am making is that I at last believe conscientiously that it is His will.

This resolution is now communicated to you the first day after it was come to ; and I am only sorry that, owing to my cautious, anxious temperament, I could not come to a final decision sooner. The letter I wrote to your secretary, Mr. W. G. Spicer, dated February 24, entreating you not to proceed to pass me a formal call, foreshadowed my present state of mind : but since then

I have looked at the question in all its bearings (and there are circumstances, at present, connected with it, that I have hinted at in every letter, which have great weight, but cannot be talked or written of), and, believe me, were I to come to you now, I would be moving in advance of the guiding 'pillar of cloud.'

I can never forget your great kindness to me when at Harecourt, and should it be agreeable to you at any future time to ask me to supply your pulpit, it will be my delight to comply.

I am, dear Brethren,

In the service of Christ,

EVAN HERBER EVANS.

Later in the meeting a resolution was carried to the effect that 'a further communication be addressed to the Rev. E. H. Evans, requesting him to reconsider his determination to refuse the call presented to him.' What led to this, in view of the terms of his refusal, we are left to guess. We surmise that the 'circumstances' he hints at meant, really, his deference to the wishes of his mother-in-law. He was a man, as we have said, strong in the instincts of the heart: where he loved he obeyed. His wife had undoubtedly much to do with bringing him to Carnarvon: his wife first, his wife's mother later, had much to do with keeping him there. Perhaps it was thought possible, with more pressure, to overcome such considera-

tions. And he was, evidently, shaken in purpose, although decided in his expression of it. He arranged to meet the deacons again in May; and there are indications that he might have modified his resolve, but for an unfortunate pamphlet which was sent him, in which there were what he considered ungenerous references to Dr. Raleigh. The interview was held: the call was finally declined; and the deacons reported that while 'expressing his deep and grateful sense of the kindness he had experienced, he assured them the obstacles to his accepting it were entirely providential and domestic.'¹

His popularity in London during those years and afterwards was very great. The organist of Harecourt tells me that he well remembers two Sundays, and the intense excitement and vast enthusiasm they produced. A few weeks later, he was taking the organ of Westminster Chapel on a Sunday evening, and, passing some remarks on the handsome interior, the leading singer said, by way of reply: 'Yes; pity it is not full; I have only seen it full once since Mr. Martin's death—when Mr. Herber Evans preached here.'

It is vain to guess what might have been, had he then come to London. Considering his nervous, highly strung temperament, it is possible that the

¹ *Church Records*, 1867-89.

obstacles to his coming were even more 'providential' than he knew. As it was, his term of service was shortened, and its boundaries came to be much limited, through his nervous breakdown. London might have still more ruthlessly dealt with him.

There is one name in this chapter that meant much to him—as it did to a choice number of others—the name of Henry Simon. When a small volume *In Memoriam* of the latter was published in 1892, Dr. Evans supplied a brief but self-revealing preface, from which we make these extracts :

He walked among his brethren as one who habitually walked with God. All felt that his 'eyes had seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.' He was a seer—one who loved to see for himself and arrive at his own conclusions. He saw what was at the back of things. It is sometimes said that the preachers of to-day only see God through the eyes of past prophets, that our poetry and philosophy are only a tradition, and our revelation only a history. In hearing Henry Simon at his best, when he had his times of inspiration, one felt convinced that this charge was not true. The God he preached was not the God of long ago—He had spoken to him that morning. The Bible before him was not only inspired but inspiring. The days of revelation are not over, for here is a prophet who is giving freshly what he has newly received. He is telling us at first hand what he has just heard, and seen in face-to-face fellowship with the Eternal. Himself

inspired, he inspired others, lifting them by his own undoubting faith into a higher atmosphere, making them dissatisfied with the average life, 'life taken at low-water mark.' His was a pure and true influence for which hundreds of men and women to-day thank God.

Henry Simon was like Quartus of old—'a brother.' He won the confidence and esteem of his brethren by his brotherly sympathy and help—always readily given. He was a power for good in the pulpit and on the platform, but his friends knew that he was a still greater power in the home circle. He was one of those rare souls who could talk as well as preach Christ. He was always genial, pleasant, attractive, and yet everyone soon felt that behind the quiet manner there were hidden strength and unsuspected tenacity of purpose. When he said some of his best things, one could see there was more behind. The goods shown in the window were drawn from an ample stock kept out of sight.

He was a good man, and it needed no effort for him to appear good. Theodore Monod once said—'We all need two conversions. First of all we need to be converted from the natural man to the spiritual man, and, in the second place, we need to be converted from the spiritual man to the natural man.' Henry Simon when first we knew him had received the two conversions. It was quite natural for him to be spiritual, and to talk about spiritual things; the life and service of God had become to him a kind of second nature.

Our gentle, genial friend has left us for a while, but many of us are richer for his life and work. Preachers

are said to be soon forgotten, but Henry Simon will live long in the memory of hundreds whose characters he has helped to form and beautify. 'How many lives have melted into the history of their time, as the gold was lost in Corinthian brass, leaving no separate monumental trace of their influence, but adding weight and colour and worth to the age of which they formed a part, and the generations that came after them !'

Where is the victory of the grave ?
What dust upon the spirit lies ?
God keeps the sacred life He gave :
The prophet never dies.

The call from Harecourt seems to have been the last to make him in any way irresolute. Other calls came : but he was too firmly attached to Salem to let them give him any uneasiness.

CHAPTER VIII

CHURCH AND HOME: CLOUD AND SUN

WHEN he settled at Salem, in 1865, the debt was over 2,000*l.* ; but, as already recorded, it had no peace. After a few years two things came in sight together (as they frequently do)—a Jubilee, and a new debt. Early in 1875, when the debt stood at 650*l.*, it was decided to make an end of it. A capital start was made ; but the effort was paralysed by the unexpected death of Mrs. Evans in May of that year. But a re-start was made in August ; everyone worked with a heart ; and he himself let the very intensity of his grief flow into the energy of his labours. The sacrifice he made, in refusing the pastorate of Harecourt Church, helped also to kindle in his people a still more generous zeal. ‘If ever the offering of the poor was blessed,’ says a correspondent, at the time of the Jubilee services, ‘the offering of the poor of this church was so : people of comparatively narrow means contributed generously.’ He himself collected, from

friends and well-wishers all over the country, as much as the sum total collected by the church.

The Jubilee services were held July 16 and 17, 1876. This is the statement that was read at one of the meetings :

	£	s.	d.
Paid of the debt from 1865 till May 1876 .	2,172	9	8
Collected for other causes from 1865 till			
December 1875	3,946	15	11
Total	£6,119	5	7

One of the speakers pointed out the need of a new platform, another pointed to the wooden ceiling and suggested its removal 'to Halifax' ; so that the new debt was already in the air. Extensive alterations were made in 1878, involving the church in a debt of over 600*l*. The services had to be held in the Guild Hall for months, under many inconveniences ; but the annual church report declares it was a year to be remembered for the number of souls brought to Christ. In it he says :

Our children and grandchildren can study the annual list of contributions for the last ten years with pleasure, as proofs of care for the cause 'from the heart as to the Lord and not to men.

I have it on the testimony of those that have the right to pass judgment that his ordinary home preaching during those years was of a very high standard in the average. Considering his in-

cessant travelling and much speaking, there were Sundays when he must have been more or less unprepared. But he seldom preached a sermon without somehow redeeming it. 'You did your best to preach badly to-night,' said one of his members to him once, 'but you didn't succeed.' No doubt what greatly assisted him, in those un leisured years, was the fact that he only preached at home in the evening—taking the morning service regularly, as we have said, at Pendref Chapel: an arrangement, surely, worthy of being copied. Before five minutes were over, he had, all but invariably, said something fresh, humorous or pathetic; and after that, he would have no further difficulty. His unrivalled gift for making a picture, in words and tones, was exercised to the full. Perhaps there was a time, under the influence of the visit of Messrs. Moody and Sankey, in 1874, and following his first period as a lecturer, when he was tempted to be sensational, in the sense of being too dramatic. And lest anyone might imagine that he fared better than, for instance, Mr. Spurgeon, it may be mentioned that he knew something of envious attacks. In a local Welsh weekly, towards the close of 1875, a series of articles appeared, under the title of 'Herberiana.' They were smartly written, anonymous and slightly venomous. In reference to these, that

faithfullest and wittiest of his friends—Gohebydd—wrote as follows from Mentone (March 11, 1876):

I had it in my mind on the appearance of the first of the articles to write to you. I was anxious to give you just one hint, but somehow did not feel there was any necessity for it. However, what I wanted to tell you was just this :—Be very careful, in all your speaking and writing, not to let anyone know that you have ever seen the articles, nor that you *know anything* about them. My good uncle J. R., after the appearance of —'s letters on 'Preaching Fables,' never preached a sermon *for years* without letting one see and feel that he had them constantly before his mind; and almost in every sermon that he preached he *defended* himself. Now, *don't you do that*. Don't see them. I have not the February *Dysgedydd* by me this moment, but if I am not mistaken there was a reference there to 'sensational sermons' and 'sensational preaching.' I fancied when reading these remarks the writer had when writing them 'Herberiana' before his mind's eye. Again we have in March number a short article, on 'Eccentric Preachers,' taken from a lecture by Spurgeon. Now, I have no particular fault to find with this, farther than this: we have some '*would-be-eccentrics*.' I should feel vexed if I ever wrote a line that would in any way *encourage* eccentricity. I have a horror of the 'would-be-eccentric' man. Give me *a bore*; give me the muff; anyone rather than the *would-be-eccentric*; and I'll just tell you what struck me when reading the last sentence (about Rowland Hill) in this article—that I smelt—

‘Herberiana’ *fyth* (once more)!—Beware : go thy way : be above noticing what any scribbler writes ; preach as well as you can, and be very unconcerned as to what is said in ‘——’!

We are inclined to think that these articles, ill-natured as they were, did some good to him personally ; but whether the good they did was equal to the pain they gave is doubtful. At any rate his popularity continued to increase, and his influence to deepen, at home and abroad.

The last month of 1876 brought him once again to feel how all things end in ‘the long dust of death.’ On December 7 his father died—the quiet, affectionate, hard-working, generous father as we all knew him—who was to *his* father of Pen yr Herber what Isaac was to Abraham. Among Dr. Evans’s papers, we have come across this unfinished elegy in prose, written, as will be seen, beside the cistern of the broken wheel :

What various memories fill my mind to-day in relation to the two words—*Coming home* ! The words recall the delight of my first coming home after having been four weeks an apprentice in the shop at Rhyd Lewis. It was hard work then to spend a few weeks without being welcomed, on returning, at the door by my father.

I have a sad reminiscence of coming home in a covered cart from the same place, in hot fever, after having been for months like a boat on the billow, physicians

and others unable to decide on which shore of the ocean I would make my home. I shall never forget the lovingness of my father during those months ; especially when he would withdraw from the room to weep, because his heart was too tender to watch the pangs of my suffering.

Coming home ! Pleasant, at a later period, was that journey, when I had been away—engaged in life's battle, and to some degree successful—in Liverpool for four years without seeing the smoke of the old chimney : yes, pleasant it was to return with character unsoiled, to receive a grateful smile and to hear my father giving thanks at the family altar.

Coming home ! Great was the anxiety that burdened my mind when coming the next time, as a preacher henceforth, to preach in the old chapel where I was received a member ; but my anxiety was nothing to my father's : it would not have been easy to count his anxious tears and sighs on my behalf that day.

Coming home ! Many a time after that I came here, when I had gone through life's varying epochs—as a husband, and as a father myself : but my father with his cheerful smile would welcome me more and more warmly from year to year ; and he mingled his tears with mine in the 'bitter bitterness' of my first grief.

Coming home !—at the summons of the telegraph, Thursday, December 7, to my father's death-bed—and before I had reached Pontselly the storm had uprooted the strong cedar : my father is not at the door—O so strange ! I must mount the stairs, he will not come to meet me. My father's smile still remains, in his

coffin : but in leaving it, he left. *He* is not here, or else he would be asking—How is *Lizzie fah*?

Coming home! Oh, the two words to-day were full of sadness! This is the strangest home-coming of all, from Capel Iwan graveyard, having left the grave full, and finding the house vacant—vacant of a father for evermore.

Coming home as an orphan—and so must I be henceforth. In most earthly homes there are only fragments of a family, although death had not——

And so the manuscript breaks off, the sentence unfinished—some half-apologetic word for death, it may be.

Once more the cloud lifted, and light returned gently to his home. In 1877, he found in a companion and friend of Jenny—in Annie Jones, Carnarvon—another gift of God to his home. In a note, found in the diary of his latter years, he expresses the wish that she might be permitted to live after him. The prayer was answered; and while having to live on without him, it is her unfailing consolation to call to mind the privilege she had of being what she was to him for nearly twenty years. It would not be fitting to write more: but such a note as this, from his 'Perennial Diary,' is defended by its sacredness:

1877 [Sept. 28]. I was married to Annie at Bettws-y-coed. I knew not then what a precious gift from God

she was to me. I bless Him, from the depth of my heart, for bringing us together, and for all the help and joy she has brought to our own sweet home.

Let not his name and fame be ever separated from faithful and devoted women already named in this record—beginning with his mother—of all of whom he could have said, with Paul, that they took much pains in the Lord ¹ to help him in every way to serve his generation.

¹ Rom. xvi. 12 (Welsh version).

CHAPTER IX

OVERDRIVEN

NO years of his life were lived more 'in deeds,' less in 'figures on the dial,' than the five years from 1874 to 1879. His toil was interrupted by the grief that came in May, but the wisdom of God, acting through the urgency of the churches, recalled him to his growing task.

In the course of three years or so he gave his lecture on 'Livingstone,' in Welsh and English, some 280 times. He prepared another lecture, taking 'Oliver Cromwell' for his subject, more biographical, more elaborate, but not so much a product of the living hour as his first lecture. It had, like the other, its passages of dramatic humour and tender eloquence, lingering freshly in the memories of men yet. As an instance of the humour we may give the scene—which he most effectively acted—of the man accustomed to good living compelled by gout and the doctor to return to simpler fare. He showed, in face and action, the petulant old man, with his basin of gruel before

him, calling for salt, calling for pepper, for salt again, for pepper again, till the servant turned on him at last with the remark : ' You may salt and pepper as you like, sir, but you will never turn gruel into roast beef.' For sympathetic eloquence we would select the episode of the death of Cromwell's daughter. Nor were passages of rousing thrill missing. Indeed, the lecture was to some extent a Nonconformist polemic ; and we are not surprised to hear of one conscientious Churchman saying at the close of it : ' In truth, lads, I must not mix any more with you, for my heart is too eager that I should take my staff and go forth with Cromwell against all oppressors.' Of him and of this lecture a well-known Baptist minister, Puritan and humourist—Rev. Robert Jones (Llanllyfni)—wrote : ' My honest conviction is that it is, on the whole, one of the best lectures I ever listened to. . . . I considered all he said to be wonderfully accurate, wonderfully eloquent, wonderfully lucid. . . . Mr. Evans is an excellent philanthropist, a man in the bosom of his nation, and endowed with special gifts to do good. . . . No one is more ready to lend a helping hand to every worthy cause.' While the name of Robert Jones is on the pen we may quote a saying of his on some occasion when he had been to hear Dr. Evans preach. Being asked what he thought of the

sermon, he replied : 'Sermon? he did not give us a *sermon*, but an awfully fine thing as substitute for a sermon.'

During these important years Dr. Evans was almost more English than Welsh. His appearances on the *cymanfa* field were comparatively few, but he appeared constantly in the great denominational anniversaries in England, in May and October. The speech that gave him instant fame was on behalf of the London Missionary Society in Exeter Hall, May, 1873. It was his first intimate contact with Mr. Spurgeon, who spoke after him, saying as he began : 'It is a very serious thing to follow a man with two such tongues !' In May, 1876, he gave addresses both at the Home Missionary and the Colonial Missionary Society. In August he preached at Cardiff one of the two Welsh Union sermons, on 'The Old Corn of the Land.'¹ In the autumn of the same year he gave a fine speech at the Bradford Congregational Union meetings. His characteristic diffidence comes out in a little incident connected with the latter occasion. He had gone out from Bradford, for quiet, and returned to the meeting, with his handbag ready packed. If he failed—as he felt almost certain he would!—he

¹ In his English volume this is entitled 'Temporary Blessings and the Ever-remaining Sources of Power' (pp. 28-48).

meant to return home by the midnight train. He was never further from failure—as many that heard him will readily and enthusiastically testify to-day. It is easy to be impatient at such nervous fears: and yet who can tell how much these fires of anxiety helped to melt and purify the golden ore of eloquence?

In 1878 he gave what the *English Independent* (May 3rd) in a leading article calls ‘an admirable and eloquent speech,’ at the annual meeting of the Bible Society, in Exeter Hall. It was a triptych of descriptive pictures: the Family Bible, the Teacher’s Bible, the Mother’s Bible. This quotation has to do with the latter:

I have it now, my lord, on my study table. I have often felt that I should like a larger Bible in my study; but this one, with a reminder on the first page that it was a mother’s wish that I should read it and believe it, has a charm about it, and, when opened, has its sweet and sad recollections so that it can never be replaced by another Bible.

During the session of the Congregational Union that same May, there was a good deal of excitement owing to the so-called ‘Leicester Conference’ of the previous year. A resolution was on the agenda, declaring that the Congregational Churches loyally adhered to the fundamental doctrines of Evangelical Faith; and the interest

produced may be gauged from the fact that on Tuesday, when the discussion was opened, and on Friday, when it was again, by adjournment, continued, Union Chapel was crowded. The Rev. J. Baldwin Brown was chairman for the year, and had taken, what Dr. Evans considered, an unfair advantage of his position to attack the resolution and snatch a verdict before discussion. Dr. Mellor moved the resolution, and it was debated for the rest of that morning, and carried on to Friday. Dr. Evans did not intervene till quite near the close, when he claimed that, after the 'Leicester Conference' had had the privilege of four speeches, Wales ought to have five minutes. The humour of the speech was overflowing; and if it added but little to the logical contents of the debate—which was from the first unprofitable—it added considerably to the good spirits of the audience. He remarked, among other things, that they in Wales did not believe much in 'that kind of science which changed diamonds into gas:'

We are quite as much afraid of professing to know too much, as to know too little. When I was a student, there was an old minister—a 'character'—Powell of Cardiff. Students were not plentiful in Wales in his days, and the first students thought a good deal of what they knew. At the ordination of one of these, old

Powell offered the prayer, and in it said : ‘O Lord, may he know much about the stars, but keep him from becoming omniscient ; help him to know much of astronomy, but save him from becoming omniscient.’ I am not sure whether the prayer was answered in that instance : but I am sure many of us can yet pray, with benefit, ‘Keep me from becoming omniscient.’ There was one sentence that I caught in the splendid address from the chair : ‘The more thoughtful among us.’ Well, to say the least, that was dividing us. . . . Let us seriously ask, Is this to be the ambition of the future among the young ministry, to be ranked with ‘the more thoughtful among us’? Are we ready to sacrifice anything for that—to think of what people think of us, and not what they think of *Him*? When I began to preach, sir, every student in Wales, as a rule, spoke much about the stars, in order to be reckoned with ‘the more thoughtful among us.’ They soon found that congregations did not choose to have the stars instead of Christ, and they came down from the stars to the rocks ; but still with the same purpose—to be of ‘the more thoughtful among us.’ But by to-day, sir, we have been obliged to leave the stars and the rocks and preach Christ crucified. We are not ashamed to say with one of old, ‘I know nothing but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified’—and he was not an ignorant man : he was one of ‘the more thoughtful among us.’

This year, also, brought him to the pulpit of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. He and Mr. Spurgeon

had met, as we have seen, on the missionary platform, five years previously. While occupying Harecourt pulpit in January, 1876, he took the opportunity on a Thursday evening to hear Mr. Spurgeon, who preached that night on 'Peter warming himself'; and in a 'Note' in the *Dysgedydd* for February, after a brief outline of the sermon, he has these remarks :

We are glad to understand that this evangelical preacher continues to keep his popularity unbroken—the most popular of any in London—after having been there for so many years. We are surprised to hear occasionally some very, very small ones assuring us that the old evangelical doctrines are 'out of date' in London pulpits. Perhaps they are in many a pulpit, and perhaps, too, that may be the reason why chapels are half empty. Londoners have shown, during Mr. Moody's visit, and still show, by overcrowding every place where Mr. Spurgeon preaches, that they are not tired of the old Gospel. . . . Many young preachers fancy that the great thing is to have freshness in the sermon ; and that freshness is something not in the Bible. Surely He who 'knew what was in man' ought to know what kind of Gospel would correspond to his need ; and if so, that is to be found *in* the Bible.

He was at the Tabernacle again towards the close of 1877: and in his monthly for December of

that year he has a long descriptive article. In the course of it he says :

His popularity can be accounted for on the ground of his bell-like voice, his transparent speech, his unshaken and unmistakable views on Divine truths, his gift of exposition, and his skill in using all kinds of illustrations and incidents; but the continuance of his popularity must be accounted for by recognising what he himself so readily recognises—that he is a man of God, filled with faith and with the Holy Ghost, and that it is his relation to God which makes him what he is to the age and to the world.

Further on he has this interesting appendix :

We had heard him preach much better, and we believed he was in pain while speaking ; and in a conversation with him after the service we found our surmise to be true. He was very plaintive, and would have it that his work was nearly done. The eldest son was in the vestry, and smiled incredulously when his father said this, and we prayed from our heart that the son's smile might prove true rather than the father's words. One of the deacons told us in going out that Mr. Spurgeon had had a week of great pain, and that he would not rest at the doctor's request ; that the doctor had once asked him, ' Which do you prefer, to labour excessively like this and die soon, or work moderately and prolong your life ? ' —and the reply was, ' Work with all my might and die soon ! ' We trust God will grant him both to work with

all his might, and live long to serve Him in the Gospel of His Son.

The confidence and the respect were mutual ; so in July, 1878, Dr. Evans occupied the world-known pulpit for the first time, taking the two services on Sunday, the 21st of that month. The day previously he had received a bright little note from Mr. Spurgeon telling him to have no anxiety : ‘ you will have a warm welcome : I have told my people about you ; and, more than that, I have prayed the Lord to be with you.’ He had a good morning service ; and just before the evening service, a thoughtful deacon came in to him smilingly saying : ‘ The collection this morning was several pounds more than last Sunday, and we have again a full house.’ His second visit was on the last Sunday of 1879, and he had a grander welcome even than before : and after he had returned home to Carnarvon he received a gift from the deacons of Mr. Spurgeon’s works in twenty-five volumes, as a proof of gratitude for the sermons and the unusually large offering—20*l.* more than had been asked for. He received from Mr. Spurgeon himself this characteristic reply, February 17, 1880, to a sympathetic message he had sent to him at Mentone :

I feel deeply grateful to you for your kind and sympathetic letter, but still more for your much-valued aid

at the 'Tabernacle. If the people at the Tabernacle are not Welsh, they certainly exhibited an enthusiasm that is a fitting response to your Welsh fire. Everyone seems to have been thoroughly delighted and edified. I think the present they gave you was meant to show their appreciation in more ways than one. I believe that the good friends gave you their Pastor's 'Sermons' because they thought them the best they could give you, and they judged you worthy of the best. In this latter part of the judgment I most heartily concur. We have now had more than six weeks' continuous summer here, and I feel nearly ready to come home. To-day is cloudy and somewhat cold, and I look upon it as hardening me off to endure the fogs, frosts, and jingoes of our wintry isle. May your good wishes for me be fulfilled in yourself! Grace, mercy, and peace be with you evermore.

Yours very gratefully,

C. H. SPURGEON.

The letter is a spiritual document, containing as it does the mystery of unanswered—almost, we might say, of discarded—prayer. He to whom it was sent, instead of having 'his good wishes' fulfilled 'in himself,' was an exile from service before he received it. On a clear day the earth had been darkened at noon.

There can be no doubt that his eloquence, before the close of this period, was at its finest glow: mature, yet fresh; varied, yet sustained; well

governed, yet exquisitely free. Dr. Robertson Nicoll says that were he asked to name the greatest oratorical triumphs he has known, he would give first place to Mr. Gladstone's speeches in his historic 'Midlothian Campaign' and to Dr. Herber Evans's Missionary Sermon to Young Men in May, 1879, at Westminster Chapel.¹ 'For sheer subduing, overwhelming eloquence Dr. Herber Evans is unequalled by any living preacher' was his testimony later in the *British Weekly*.

And it was eloquence that made history. It would be easy—and vain—to multiply private and public words of enthusiastic eulogy. We select three letters only, because they record tangible results. The first is from the late Rev. J. White, Belfast (April 16, 1877):

I think it right to say, for your encouragement, that your services yesterday have been wonderfully owned of God. Last night several young men decided for Christ, and to-night in the vestry I met some very interesting cases. A young lady who was rather gay told me that she had been led, while you were preaching last night, to give herself to Jesus. Our prayer meeting to-night was really a wonderful time—the room crowded, great

¹ It is the sermon that gives the title to his volume: 'True and False Aims.' As in the case of other great sermons of the past, the body is there, but who can re-furnish it with soul? A great sermon, like the 'noble dust of Alexander,' might give a Hamlet occasion to reflect.

solemnity and power, many inquirers, and several found peace. The people all say we never had such a day in Donegall Street. I know this will cheer you, and make you feel that your visit here has not been in vain.

And if ever you visit us again, never did monarch receive a more hearty welcome than we shall give you.

The Rev. J. K. Nuttall, of Sunderland (later of Liverpool), in 1878 made arrangements for special preachers to visit the town during the winter months for a week-evening sermon. Dr. Allon, Dr. Dale, Baldwin Brown, Dr. Mellor, were on the selected list, with Dr. Evans. The experiment proved so successful that a similar programme was arranged for the autumn of 1879. In writing to him (June 5, 1879) Mr. Nuttall says :

My dear Mr. Evans,—Many, many thanks for your sermon at Westminster Chapel. The young men who heard it will not soon forget it.

I tried to see you, according to arrangement, but failed. When at Mr. Drury's you were kind enough to say that if I saw you in London you would fix the time for another visit to us. . . . Many and many a time by members of all denominations I have been asked when you are coming to preach again. No minister I know has produced so profound an impression upon the town. The spiritual life of members was quickened by your sermon, and I found afterwards there was a great desire to have a prayer meeting after it. I am anxious beyond

expression that we should have a baptism of blessing next autumn and winter. I do believe your coming would inaugurate it. Could you spend a Sabbath and four following days with us? If you could, I feel persuaded that both here and hereafter you would have cause for gratitude. You have no idea of the kind and depth of feeling your visit aroused. I know we are asking much, but the strong conviction I have of the great results which would follow embolden me to make my request.

He revisited Sunderland that autumn, the very week Mr. Gladstone began his campaign¹; and he had a most cordial reception, with most cheering results.

The other letter explains itself:

Llanwrtyd Wells, December 4, 1879.

My dear Herber,—I cannot forgo the pleasure of sending you a very gratifying piece of intelligence,

¹ Among his 'Monthly Notes' for December is the following: 'We are writing our "Notes" on the Borders of Scotland, within sound of the warning fog-horn of Sunter Point' lighthouse. We have been visiting the lighthouse, one of the few already lit by the electric light. We can hear the fog-horn as we write. Last night, Gladstone began his campaign in the Northern Athens; and his speech is on the table before us; and for the life of us we cannot help comparing him to the light and warning sound of Sunter Point. The country seems surrounded with thick mist, and in the midst of danger—the danger of colliding with some other country; and Gladstone has begun to throw his shining light around, revealing perilous places, and to sound the trumpet which is heard near and far, warning our country against destruction.'

which was communicated to me the other day by Mr. McLaine of Cardiff, for whom I preached a Sunday or two ago. On reaching their home, two young men, after hearing your eloquent 'Address to Working Men' at Cardiff, threw their latchkeys on the table, and said, 'There, no more latchkeys for us !'

With heartiest regards, always cordially,

J. R. KILSBY JONES.

It is noteworthy how, in all these testimonies, the young so prominently appear. This is due, not simply to the fact of fresh youthful hearts being more impressible, but the man and his eloquence—sunny, hopeful, stimulating as both were—appealed captivately to the young.

PART III.

DARKENED NOON

(1880-1884)

‘A great cloud . . . and a brightness was about it’

CHAPTER I

‘WHEN I WAS STRICKEN DOWN’

HIS manifold and incessant labours had made his friends for some time anxious, and their warnings were becoming more frequent and more emphatic. After his missionary sermon he went over from London to Paris, and spent a happy holiday there and at Brussels. But he returned again to a series of lectures, anniversaries, special services, all over the country. He felt so well in the midst of it all that he laughed at the fears of his friends. He gave at Liverpool in August a memorable address, at the ‘Public Meeting’ in connection with the Welsh Union of Independents, on ‘The Perils of Young Men in Large Towns’; and at Cardiff in October, in connection with the Congregational Union, he spoke at the ‘Working men’s meeting’ on ‘Self-respect, Self-culture, Self-sacrifice.’ The year closed, as we have seen, with a most happy Sunday at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. On the last Sunday of the following January (1880) he

was preaching anniversary sermons at Stockport. He was not well during the day, and at night felt so ill that he thought he would die before the morning. He was told by Dr. Rayner, whom he consulted there, that he had overworked himself. He lectured on 'Oliver Cromwell' on his way home at St. Asaph, and broke down completely in the course of delivering it. As he said to his students, when re-delivering at their request his lecture on 'Dr. Livingstone,' March, 1895, 'I was ambitious, and I left this messenger of peace and began to lecture on the man of war, Oliver Cromwell : and my health broke down—Cromwell nearly killed me, as he had many others before me.' As soon as he reached Carnarvon, he consulted his own doctor, and was ordered complete rest for months. 'I did not believe then,' he wrote some three months later, 'but that I would be quite well again in a few days : but by this I have been obliged to believe that his testimony was true.'

He went to Ponselley—his 'harbour of refuge in every storm.' He suffered much, from the first hour of his illness ; especially was he distressed with pain in the head. 'I often feared my heart, but never my head,' he wrote in his diary for 1880 ; 'and what a month it has given me ! If I read or thought, I was punished at once.' Among his

‘WHEN I WAS STRICKEN DOWN’ 197

papers we find the following Sunday meditation, written in Welsh, during those days at Pontselly :

I was to have been in London preaching to the English to-day—according to my own little scheme—but Providence has driven me here, to commune in the old country chapel where I was received a member. ‘Big Meeting Sunday’—that is the name of the monthly Communion Sunday in these parts, because, as a rule, the attendance is the largest of the whole month : every one tries to find a path to the sanctuary to remember the Death of the Cross ; and here they are wending their way to-day, as we remember them years ago.

The River Cuch has not changed at all ; the pool under the bridge is exactly the same : but it is surprising to see how strange to us are the faces of those who cross the bridge for the meeting. Where are the old wayfarers—‘Owen o’r Bachau,’ David Peregrine, ‘Enoch y Nant’? John Miles, the blind precentor, remains ; but he goes on my brother’s arm, instead of my father’s. Yonder is David Evans, but without ‘Jacky the Shoemaker.’ Little did we think in writing our note on Jacky to the February number of *Dysgedydd*, before starting for Stockport, where we were taken ill, that our next Communion would be taken at Bryn Sïon. But this is the harbour in every storm : we put in here when nature is out of repair ; and this time the banks of the Cuch and the neighbourhood of Bryn Sïon have been as kindly as ever to it, reviving and reinforcing us.

When we reached the chapel, we saw that the graveyard was filling at the expense of robbing the chapel of many we knew. We thought it was necessary for a man to live but few years before his native district is stranger to him than the 'tranquil realm of golden harps.'

He returned to Carnarvon, only to find that the apparent restoration was utterly deceptive. Towards the end of April he consulted Dr. Russell Reynolds ; from him to learn that his healing must come from time. In private and in public, from far and near, he received much sympathy during the silent months that followed : and all of it shows how far and deep his influence had gone, and what sincere regard he had won from all his brethren. One of these letters, from Dr. Griffith John, for its own intrinsic worth, and for its writer's sake, shall be selected to represent the rest :

Hankow : July 22, 1880.

My dear Brother,—No letters have passed between you and me since my return to China, for which silence I am sorry. I don't think that I should break this silence but for one thing—namely, that I have just heard that you have been completely laid aside by a very severe indisposition. This being the case, I feel an irresistible impulse to write you, and tell you that you have my very deepest sympathy and heartiest prayers. I do trust that you are able to cast this great burden on

our dear Lord, Who is ever near to us, and ever inviting us to come to Him with all our burdens, feeling assured that He will take them, and give us in exchange for them His own unspeakable peace and rest. Since I saw you last, God has placed you in positions of great eminence and usefulness. You have probably been working too hard, and are now suffering the consequences of over-exertion. I trust the prostration will soon pass away, and that you will emerge out of the trial a stronger man than ever. You, my dear brother, have been telling your people from time to time that they need the afflictions with which their Father visits them, and you will have no difficulty now in applying the lesson to yourself. Perhaps He is preparing you for revelations of Himself such as you have never had hitherto, in order that you may be able to tell men of that boundless love and wisdom in Him to which you may yourself be a comparative stranger at this time. If this is our Father's way of giving you a glimpse into the holiest of all ; and if the result will be that you will come forth to your people and the country at large with your face shining as it never shone before, you and all of us will have abundant reason to bless His grace in thus leading you into the valley of suffering. I can only commend you to His love, feeling assured that He will never leave you nor forsake you.

Now good bye, dear old friend,

Yours affectionately,

G. JOHN.

It was during these months of lonely darkness, while staying at Matlock, that the incident happened which he described in a 'Monthly Note' twelve years later :

When the writer entirely lost his health and his strength in January, 1880, he was for months without being able to speak in public, and he used to wonder much, when he heard a preacher shout, how it was his head did not split. To sing in chapel was to him impossible during those months. His strength was shortened in the way ; he was sent to Matlock for three months, and he can say with Dr. Maclaren that the physician there was the first to understand him and set his foot on the first rung of the ladder, to climb up, very slowly. Dr. Hunter sent him from there to Buxton, and on the first Sunday morning after reaching there he felt much better, and he was very eager to know if he could speak aloud without injuring himself. He went out of the town, far into the country, until he had reached an out-of-the-way spot without a house in sight. He could see nothing whatever but the fields and beasts grazing in them. He stood leaning on an old gate, and began to recite aloud an old hymn ; he ventured to raise his voice higher, and then shouted as on a *cymanfa* field :

O fryniau Caersalem ceir gweled !¹

¹ First line of a famous hymn which may be paraphrased thus :

When we, from the high hills of Salem,
The way through the desert review,

The horses in the field on the left were raising their heads in *hwy!*, and the sheep in the field above the road were listening attentively—not one grazing, but all of them listening and wondering at the strangeness of the sound in so quiet a place. The preacher, too, by this, was surprised to find he could get into the *hwy!* in addressing animals, and was more jubilant than Samson when he had his strength to destroy restored to him, believing he would regain, to some degree, his strength to bless his fellow-men. That Sabbath was in the midst of summer ; he returned to the Lord’s house to worship ; but along the way he heard the birds sing, and he was content they should sing, and was ready to unite with them, the first time for many months. He had some hope, from that moment, that he might yet do a little service before rest-time, though never as formerly. The constitution had been cracked, and there was no hope for the effects of that to disappear while on earth ; and he must confess that his strength recovered very slowly. He was like a child learning to walk the second time, and afraid of failing and breaking down again as he made each step forward. If someone were to tell him that Sunday morning that he would revisit that spot in some twelve years time another man, to return thanks to the Lord for complete recovery of strength, he could never have believed him.

Its many rough places and windings
 Will ever our rapture renew :
 The storms on the distant horizon,
 And death, and the grave, will be past ;
 While we shall in love be enfolded,
 As deep as the sea and as vast.

He reappeared in Salem pulpit on Sunday, December 12, and gave what he called an 'address,' rather than a sermon. This is given in the next chapter.

Next day his only son was born—Owen Herber—a gift of Heaven for dark days, to be recalled when the clouds were breaking up for a peaceful afternoon.

All through the long year he found in his church much comfort. His deacons did not spare themselves to further the good work while their pastor was all but helpless. In a brief review of the year 1880, published in the annual report, he wrote :

Although our union as church and minister has now continued for fifteen years, and we have oftentimes rejoiced together, enjoyed together, wept together during that period, nevertheless the last year has been a strange and exceptional one—as a year of long affliction to me, and of intense anxiety and instant prayer to you on my behalf.

Perhaps my affliction has made me more precious to you, as your kindness and prayers have made you far dearer to me. Be that as it may, I do not 'cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.'

. . . . Let us put forth greater efforts to bring the children in our families and our Sunday schools to Jesus

Christ. We must needs feel these days that the hearts of hearers in Wales are as hard as ‘the wayside,’ and that sowing is to sow ‘among thorns.’ But here is ‘good ground’—the children : let us sow here, and it will ‘bring forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixty fold, some thirtyfold.’ How beautiful was the sight of eighteen of them standing up for Christ, for the first time, at the last Communion ! I beg of you, every one individually, to set apart some portion of every week to pray for an abundant outpouring of the Holy Ghost, that this careless age may be saved.

There is plenty of work, hard but glorious, for us all in the future. Sufficient strength has been promised to do it. The best Master keeps watch over the entire field, and takes notice of every true worker. He comes constantly, and His reward is with Him. . . . Let us start again more diligently than ever. Let us unflinchingly believe that he who works best sings most. It is work for Christ in every age that fills the soul with the ‘joy of salvation.’ Working for Him keeps souls near to Him, and so without a thought of turning back, and lusting after false pleasure. . . . Let us be too much taken up with striving against sin to have time to strive with one another. . . . If some around us continue to ‘wrest’ the Word of God ‘unto their own destruction,’ let us use it as a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, to direct us into a sheltering home and a quiet resting-place, after the wearisome journey and heavy weather of this life. It will be sweet in the end, after doing our duty, to be ‘*at home* with the Lord.’

CHAPTER II

THE WAVE

First Address, Sunday Morning, December 12, 1880

AFTER months of silence I determined last Lord's Day to address you from this pulpit to-day, should God give me strength and facility. On Monday morning I went out by fair Menai's banks, a path which only my illness served to show me. There are many pleasing and beautiful walks around the town, even as there are many calm and charming byways of meditation, which I would not have discovered had not illness driven me to search for them. When a tender Providence with one hand bars one's way with thorns, with the other hand it opens before him other walks, and leads him by other pathways, newer and, so, richer with suggestive truth. As I walked within sound of the wave, meditating and questioning myself as to what text I should take for the Sabbath, said the wave to me: 'What creates interest in me is that I start from afar, that I come from the utmost bounds of the great wide sea; I am a little wave, but I bear in my bosom the sound and power of the Great and Unsearchable. Has the Great and Unsearchable had nothing to do with thee? During the silent months that have passed has

not wave after wave risen in thy soul? Let the people hear their sound—give to them what was given to thee by the vast ocean which lies behind each thoughtful soul; let them hear the voice of Nature itself—the real experience of the soul speaking to them.’ The waves are *little things*, but they are full of the language and magic of Nature, and the great ocean lies behind them. My experience this day will also consist of very little things; but I believe that everyone who has his ear attuned to hear such things will hear the sound of the ocean behind them. And I will be pardoned for referring a little, in my first address, to my own experience.

When I was taken ill, on the last Sunday in the first month of this year, the first text that came to my mind the following Monday night, on a strange bed, was: ‘Verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity’ (Psalm xxxix. 5). I never felt better nor stronger than in the days preceding this illness. I had preached to thousands a little earlier, and many times to large audiences in the succeeding weeks; I felt as if in the zenith of my power. But in a moment my strength was shortened in the way, and I was as weak as a babe. And this is the text that whispered in my ear: ‘Verily,’ etc. The only thing certain about man when at his best is that *nothing is certain*: his health, his strength, his reason, his talent—all is vanity even at the best. If in these thou puttest thy trust, go softly; thy flag may be lowered to half-mast ere to-morrow morning. Do you hear the wave, healthy people—strong people? ’Tis but a little wave this morning, touching the shore

beside you, its sound as faint as the whispering in a shell ; but, remember, there lies behind it an ocean of power and authority. 'Every man at his best state is altogether vanity.'

When I had somewhat recovered I was sent, like the first preachers, to fish, and after that the wave that broke on the shore of my meditations changed its key. The text that now continually came up was : 'Follow Me, and I will *make* you fishers of men' ; 'From henceforth thou shalt *catch* men.' I was possessed with a strong desire to do my old work of preaching better, to make it far more effective ; and I saw the great mystery of fishing in the words 'I will *make* you.' Not talent or human learning, not ordination to the work or authority to perform it, will enable man to 'catch' men, but something from Christ Himself. 'I will *make* you fishers of men.' Many a time have I seen the great man, with splendid tackle shining, trying to catch fish. He could say : 'I have authority from the landowner to fish here ; I have licence from the Government.' So far, so good ; but he has not been MADE a fisherman ; he catches no fish. Years ago there were seen in Wales clergymen licensed by Government and authority of Bishops to fish, but they caught nothing ; and after them came old preachers and 'hedge-side' evangelists, as they were called. But wherever they went, they caught men ; for the same Jesus had said in answer to their *soul's* desire, 'I will MAKE you fishers of men.'

Have you seen the true fisherman at his work ? He

does not stand erect above the pool, and show himself a fisherman anxious to catch ; nay, the secret is to hide *himself*. See him lying at length, and upon his knees. To what purpose ? To hide himself ! See him behind the bushes, moving cautiously—hiding himself ! Everything in order to catch. Look at Paul fishing for men : ‘ I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some.’ ‘ I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ.’ He knew of their poets and literature ; but he hid himself, and showed forth Jesus Christ. *There* was a man MADE a fisher of men, one who had learned how to keep himself in the shade and to hold Christ in view ; and he caught men everywhere.

To fish and catch nothing is a sorry occupation, and such a fisherman soon tires ; but he who catches is contented, and knows no weariness. His basket is full—yes, but another excellent pool lies yonder ; so onward he goes, until night overtakes him. So the fisher of men ; when he catches, he never wearies at his work. ‘ Thou shalt catch men ’—a real catching that ! Is there anything more worth living for than this ? A splendid thing to live, like Milton, to write a book which no gravedigger can ever bury out of sight. It is worth living, like Luther, to compose one religious hymn—a hymn which the persecutor can never kill with hatchet, or burn with flame, or bind with chain—a hymn which will be sung by generation after generation of those who are on the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward. But why should we speak of hymns and books, or any other product of the human mind ? It is men themselves that

are immortal ! These are they who will shine like the stars for ever and ever. ' To catch men ' and place them before God, so that they stand in the radiance of His throne for ages more in number than the hymns and books ever composed. A real catching this ! O God, I pray more fervently than ever, make Thou me—make all the preachers and teachers of the country—fishers of men !

When at Matlock, a neighbourhood full of invalids seeking for health, the wave gave me another text ; and this one demands its place, as a subject for reflection, in my first address from this pulpit. After it there came many another text to the mind, and they await opportunity and strength to deal with them ; but as for the Matlock text, that will take neither denial nor postponement ; and if you turn to the Book of Nahum, i. 7, you will see the words :

'The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble ; and He knoweth them that trust in Him.'
The excellency of God as One in whom to trust in the day of trouble.

' *The Lord is good.*' That is the only safe anchorage for one who is being driven by the tempests of afflictions and fears—unshaken belief in the words 'The Lord is good.' Once man weighs his anchor from this refuge, he at once begins to drift into the mist of doubts and fears, and will soon have reached the sandbanks of perilous speculations, and thence some wave or whirlwind will hurl him against one of the destructive rocks of unbelief ; and he sinks at last without hope, and without

God in the world. The Bible assures us that the same God who created the world in the beginning will judge it in the end ; and I believe these words may be proclaimed when the Books of Judgment are closed, and in the presence of every created being, 'The Lord is good' ; and that no single soul, having seen the end, will dare question their truth. Many a wheel in the mighty machinery appears to move contrary to a good purpose ; but when the end is seen, everything, from first to last, will be perceived as worthy of a God infinitely just and good. The creation is too vast, and time is too long, and God's intentions regarding man and the world extend too far into the past and future—the chain is too great a mystery—for any short-lived man, who can but see a few links of it, to bring forward his supposed proofs against the great Ruler's goodness and love.

It is a matter for Faith, and not for Reason, to believe that 'God is a Spirit—God is Light—God is Love.' He is a God so glorious, so blessed, that, as Chrysostom said, 'If Satan himself could believe Him, he would be saved.' And the history of mankind, from its dawn until to-day, shows sufficient happiness and goodness—progress and development towards what is loftier and more excellent—to give me unshaken faith in the goodness of Him who is at the helm. The most precious thing I see on earth to-day—the man who demands the highest respect—the greatest regard—is a good character. In every land, among all civilised nations, it is not the bad character that is honoured and respected ; but the good man, the excellent character, everywhere. What

does this show? That He who is at the helm steers the world upward towards goodness of character. If I saw the world growing to honour the bad man and magnifying the bad character, I would believe that the world was going to destruction, and I would discontinue singing

Fy Nhad sydd wrth y llyw.

(My Father's at the helm.)

Let us always remember that even as there are justice and goodness in God's character, so has He created us, not simply to make us happy, but to make us noble characters. That is a key which has opened for me many a difficult lock in the earthly life—'remembering.' I am here not for the sake of happiness, but for the sake of character—the true character.

And more : that it is through forming in us excellent characters God gives us heavenly happiness on earth. Now, it costs each one of us dearly to form such a character. Through many tribulations we reach not only heaven, but the possession of a heavenly character on earth. It is a costly process to make a noble character out of such natures as yours and mine, but it is worth all the trouble. It is worth passing through every trial in order to make thee a good man—so that the good God may delight in thy company for ever. And it is certain that such characters cannot be developed save in the midst of difficulties, temptations, and sufferings. If we think of any virtue, we see at once that it could not rise into view in a world which had no difficulties.

While we see suffering and pain on one hand, on the other we see characters elevated thereby on every side. Come with me to a house in the town, where the father is an irritable man, coarse of words, and the mother a talkative woman, fond of judging and blaming her neighbours. One day the darling child of these parents was taken very ill ; she was imprisoned in her room for months. Throughout those months there was one room in that house wherein no harsh and grating word was heard from the father—that room softened his voice and ennobled his character. In that room the mother dared not abuse her neighbours—the glance of her little sick girl's eye bade her leave all abuse outside the door. See that father at dawn of spring, hastening through the chill air across the fields to seek for primroses and the first sweet lily for the child who lies a prisoner in the room upstairs. He knew of the field where they budded first ; and great is his fear lest someone should find them before him. And do you see how, having found them, he has lost all his roughness—thinking how glad the invalid will be of the posy. They are wet, not only with dew, but with a father's tears, ere the house is reached. Hear the tenderness of his whole nature in the words : ' There, my little one, the first flowers of the year.' See the eyes of the invalid and of her father like living wells ! And after months of weakness she has changed the atmosphere of the whole house, and ennobled the characters of her father and mother. Suffering and affliction change and ennoble characters around us in this manner through all the world and through all the years.

We must not expect results from our afflictions and personal troubles while we *are* suffering ; the mind at such times is often too confused. As the Apostle said : ‘ No chastening for the *present* seemeth good ; nevertheless, *afterward*.’ Yes ; ‘ *afterward* ’ the promised fruit. Early in the springtime the gardener goes out to prune the fruit-trees in the garden. His child follows him. ‘ Although you have trimmed the trees, father, there is no fruit.’ ‘ Not yet, but *afterward* ’ the fruit will come. And maybe we shall not see all the fruit ripened by the flaming sun of earth’s tribulations until we reach the land above. That is how those of our world are recognised when they reach there : ‘ These are they which came out of great tribulation.’ And I would not care to go there without bearing upon me the family impress ; I would not like the angel to point towards them, saying : ‘ These are they which came out of the land of great tribulation, *except him*.’

To be made ‘ fit ’ to share the inheritance of saints ‘ in the light ’—to be made characters that can bear the light, is sufficient to make us say, in spite of all affliction and pain, when ‘ we see the end of the Lord,’ that ‘ He is very pitiful and of tender mercy.’

‘ *A strong hold in the day of trouble.*’ You know what a troubled ‘ spirit ’ is ? You know well what bodily trouble means. But do you know what it is to suffer pain or anxiety, fear or agony, until, quite worn out, you say : ‘ I cannot do or suffer any more ; I am overwhelmed ’ ? On such a day this promise will be sweet : ‘ A strong hold is He in the day of trouble.’ The word for ‘ strong hold ’ is a

very forcible word, variously translated in the Bible. 'A mighty strong hold' is perhaps the best rendering. It is worth explaining these terms which God applies to Himself. They are as lamps bright with the light of heaven, to draw us to Him who is a strong hold in the day of trouble. God's rod always smites toward, and not away from, Him. The sighs of our spirit are as waves driving us to the rock. And there lies the promise for you and for me—not that we shall be delivered from the day of trouble, but that God will be a 'strong hold' to us. Nay, it is possible for us to be led to a Gethsemane of trouble, until we cry : 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' But the promise will remain for us, as for Jesus, 'A strong hold is He in the day of trouble.'

It is a great and blessed thing to live feeling that we are perfectly secure in the face of all troubles, of every experience that may meet us ; and God wants us so to feel. Others have felt so. Paul has a saying which has charmed me lately : 'A man in Christ.' 'I knew a man in Christ,' he says of himself. 'A man in Christ' ! That is the right sort of man ! That is man in the right place ! A safe man ! 'A man in Christ !' Were you to ask me what I long to be, I would answer : 'A man in Christ.' Paul in his writings uses the phrase 'in Christ' thirty-three times. He had fallen in love with the saying 'in Christ.' 'A man in Christ.' You may cast him into the inner prison, but he is there 'A man in Christ.' Hear him sing until the prison trembles ! The ship may be wrecked for him, as for another ; but in the midst of it behold him—he is *there* 'A man in Christ'

—a captain of the ship's captain, telling him what to do, and assuring the sailors that not one life shall be lost. He may be led to the place of execution. If ever you go to Rome, the place will be shown you whereon he was put to death ; and on that spot he is 'A man in Christ,' crying, as his head is severed from his body, 'For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' Paul in the 8th of Romans begins the chapter by saying : 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' To whom? To them which are 'in Christ Jesus.' And he ends it by issuing a splendid challenge : 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' No condemnation if in Christ : no separating from Christ either—by anything in life, nor anything in death. The 'man in Christ' is more than conqueror over every enemy that was, is, and will be.

'And He will know those which trust in Him.' God has said : 'I *know* all the fowls of the air.' But here there is more than that : 'He *knoweth* these' as 'they that *trust* in Him.' And that is the greatest honour you can do to man—yes, and likewise to God—to *trust in Him*. This it is to 'honour the Son'—to trust in Him. You can do nothing worse than refuse to trust in God, and nothing better than trust in Him. But the other phase of the truth is that you who trust in the Lord may use the Psalmist's words : 'I am poor and needy, yet the Lord *thinketh* upon me.' What discourages the poor is that everybody forgets them ; and indeed that which often saddens the sufferer is that he is forgotten. But what of that, if he can say : 'The Lord thinketh upon me'?

Should friends be disappointing, here is one Friend who remains the same. 'The Lord thinketh upon me : ' He *has* thought upon me before I ever thought of Him ; He *does* think of me when so often I forget Him ; the Lord *will* think upon me in every trouble and distress, *will* think upon me in every anxiety and in death.

Before closing my address, may I entreat you more earnestly than ever—Trust in this God who adorns Himself with names so comforting and encouraging to us ! The names, the nature, and the religion of this good God suit us. His is a religion to support men in a world of troubles. It is easy to perceive, on seeing a ship on the sea-shore, that it was not intended for dry land. Its form and make testify that it is meant for the ocean. Christianity in its Saviour, Jesus the Sufferer, in its promises and consolations, has been adapted by this God, not for those in a paradise, but for a world and a life of troubles ; for man tossed from wave to wave. But all is well, if we can trust in Him who is at the helm.

I shall never forget my voyage when a young lad from Swansea to Liverpool on a stormy night. The wind blew more and more violently, the sea roared, and I was ill, and believed that the surging waves would destroy us. But in the midst of the uproar I could hear someone calling out, ever and anon, the livelong night 'All right ahead !' 'All right ahead !' 'All right, indeed !' said I, in discontented mood : 'how can all be right, and I so ill, and many around me moaning so piteously in pain ?' But although knowing and hearing all this, the 'look-out' man kept shouting, 'All right ahead !' And

by the journey's end he was right. Although some were ill, and some were weeping with fear, the great purpose of the journey was being realised, and we reached the haven we desired.

So is it still on life's great voyage. Many of us are ready to complain because of sickness and trouble ; but the angel on the watch continues to call out, 'All right ahead !' Let us trust in Him who is at the helm—let us trust in all His promises, and we shall yet be heard to sing happily as we reach another shore :

Fy Iesu wnaeth bob peth yn dda.

(' My Jesus hath done all things well. ')

CHAPTER III

‘THE CLOUDS RETURN AFTER THE RAIN’

ON the first page of his diary for 1881 are two notes :

Preached only four Sundays during the year gone by.

Thinking much of the year that is gone with its great sickness. We begin this, not so well : may its end be better !

It is not often I have spent the first of the year at home. I begin it with a boy in my home—may God bless him !

Then follow these brief insertions :

2nd, Sunday.—I preached in the evening, and felt better—stronger than when I preached my first sermon [see previous chapter].

7th, Friday.—After being out for a walk with Mr. W., Bontnewydd, I went and wrought at my sermon—and was taken ill at dinner.

9th, Sunday.—I preached in the evening, but very nervously, and was greatly prostrated. It was preaching at a terrible cost.

16th, *Sunday*.—Did not attempt to preach, although I was again better. A fiercely cold Sunday: snow and frost.

17th, *Monday*.—Dear Annie not so well.

23rd, *Sunday*.—Preached in the evening, with considerable comfort. The first service I conducted all through, without help from others.

25th–28th.—Found it difficult to prepare for Sunday. Dear Annie's chest causes me a good deal of anxiety. I cannot bear worry now.

30th, *Sunday*.—Commenced the service in the morning before Eifionydd.¹ Preached at night—stronger than ever since this day twelvemonth when I was taken ill.

31st, *Monday*.—This night twelvemonth very ill at St. Asaph: a taste of death itself.

Thank God for being again able to preach, anyhow!

February 6th, *Sunday*.—Did not preach all day. . . . Received eighteen young people into the church.

13th, *Sunday*.—Preached first part of sermon, on 'Yr ydym ni yn gweld Iesu' ('We see Jesus'). Meant to preach at night: but Mrs. H. [his mother-in-law] was taken ill, and I was greatly put out.

27th, *Sunday*.—Preached at Pendref, morning; and at Salem, at night: finished my sermon of Sunday fortnight. The best Sunday since I was taken ill.

Thank God!

After that Sunday, he preached with fair regularity, following the rule of Pendref in the morning,

¹ A member at Salem, journalist and poet.

‘CLOUDS RETURN AFTER RAIN’ 219

and Salem at night : but these two notes give a slight variation :

May 15th, Sunday.—Preached at Beddgelert, once. My first Sunday from home : I felt rather nervous. What a shock I have had, for its effects to continue so long !

June 26th, Sunday.—Preached at Trefriw, 11 and 6, English and Welsh. First whole Sunday from home.

August 17th, he was at the funeral of the Rev. William Griffith, Old Tabernacle, Holyhead, one of the saintliest names of the Welsh pulpit, or, indeed, of any pulpit : and these words—part of an address, brief but never to be forgotten, which he gave on the occasion—have their intrinsic worth enhanced, when we consider through what valley of shadows the speaker had been led of late :

To-day, my dear friends, my faith in the blessed life beyond is stronger than ever. Can I believe that this old pulpit is to remain, and that William Griffith is gone for ever ? Can I believe that ‘Old Tabernacle,’ stone and mortar, is to last for centuries, and that the great preacher is snuffed out of existence by the grim and grisly hand of Death ? No ! To-day, it is harder to believe it than ever ! The great author Mr. H. T. Buckle, who was inclined to be sceptical, after standing over the grave of his mother wrote these words : ‘ *One thing alone I cling to, the deep and unalterable conviction, that we never really die.*’ Those were true words wrung from him by the open grave. No—we never *really die*. Life

is not here ; life is yonder. The earth cannot give any of us a home—only a grave. Life is a great problem, but its great solution is yonder. I like those words describing the life beyond—‘A river of water of life clear as crystal.’ Life clarified, purified, unsoiled by any earthly sediment, flowing smoothly like a river. Here, to the best of men, it is life struggling with disease and death—life in a world surrounded by an atmosphere laden with the malarial poison of centuries of wrongdoing and sin—life in a society full of bad men causing wrangling and discords : but yonder, life perfected—all earthly hindrances removed for ever : all imperfection ceaseth ; then heaven begins. The tomb is neither dark nor empty, it is full of light. Sleep then, O thou beautiful Christian ! in thy dreamless bed, until the time thou hast prayed for has come. Sleep on, at rest from thy toil—there shall be ‘no more pain,’ no more insulted feelings, no wounded affections. Love and friendship will cast their garlands over thy memory to keep it green, and hearts of good men and women will bless thee for the glorious work thou hast so well done.

Weeks of hopeful renewal succeeded, and he was enabled to take the services at home regularly. But the chastening of the Lord was not yet over : early in 1882, after preaching one Sunday morning at Pendref, he had a serious relapse : and the rest of the year was spent in quest of health. Some letters written to his daughter during his wanderings, while they show how disappointing was the

quest, are lighted up with quiet reassuring humour. The first was written from Worthing, April 1 :

Since you have written me so faithfully, I must now drop you a line. I have been very unwell, many days, since I wrote to you last, but I feel much better to-day, and I am very thankful. I am more thankful than if I had not been ill. We all value health more after we have lost it, than we did before. I was very glad to receive your letters. They are very interesting, only the spelling is, as usual, rather careless. It is not that the young lady does not know, but that she will not take time to *think* ! . .

We went to Brighton one day this week, and Papa got quite ill in the Aquarium, where all kinds of fishes are shown. Just think of Papa getting ill among the fishes !! I am going back to London on Monday to see the doctor again, and then I hope to be back in Carnarvon before Wednesday night. You take care to get rid of your cold before then. How did you get it? I am certain it was in the election rows.

I am very tired of being from home now ; and I never thought when I left of being away so long. I must go again somewhere for a fortnight, because the doctor won't let me preach.

In May he was at Llandrindod, in a state of health and mind explained by the next letter :

My dear Daughter,—We are both looking out through the window at the rain coming down—but the

rain reminded me that I had promised you a letter, so there is never a drawback but it is a gain to someone. Mamma and I went out fishing this morning, and I caught two *big* trout and five small ones ; it was rare fun. Mamma was quite excited, when the hooked fish was being drawn right across a wide river. Yesterday we went to hear Mr. Kilsby Jones twice, and he preached excellently well. He was here with us to tea and talked such a lot, until he quite excited poor Papa. I remember the time I could talk all day as he does now, and I sometimes wonder whether I shall be able ever to do it again. When I hear anyone preaching I do want to try so much, and to be able to do so without pain. If our dear Heavenly Father will restore my strength, I think I'll preach better than ever. This place agrees with me better than any place I have been in yet.

I hope you and *mammam*¹ are quite well, and that the new servant is a good one, and that she will please *nain*.¹ You ought to look after things now, a good deal ; and if you do, always speak kindly and quietly to the servant. Don't *order* and speak noisily—that is very vulgar and low. I hope you will help to make dear grandma's old age happier. God will be sure to reward you. It is those who are kind to aged relations that get His favour.

He was at Harrogate, in August, and the following letter shows us how distressed his mind was, and how his unfailing good humour helped to save him at the darkest :

¹ Both words stand for 'grandmother.'

‘CLOUDS RETURN AFTER RAIN’ 223

August 2, 1882.

My dear Wife,—I saw the doctor again to-day, and asked him what he meant by saying ‘that I ought not to preach for another twelve months.’ His reply was that, if I did, in his opinion I would get a relapse soon, and perhaps a worse one than ever—but if I rested until I was quite well, I might go on for years. As you might think, this has made me very sad, and the worst of it is that Mr. Parry is of exactly the same opinion as the doctor ; so that I am in a regular muddle again, not knowing what to do. I really did believe that if the church gave me this summer to rest I would be well ; and I have done everything in my power to get well by September. I have denied myself the pleasures of home, and gone everywhere where I thought health was to be had, and here I am again, not ready for work. Is it not heart-rending ? I know it might have been a great deal worse, I might have been a greater sufferer, in more pain. I might have been too poor to be able to rest. But, to me, the great burden is that I *cannot* PREACH *without danger*. Will you join to open a draper’s shop ? or shall we start a lodging house ? No—I’ll turn bookseller in opposition to —, and a publisher of a newspaper in opposition to the *Celt* ! . . .

Undoubtedly 1882 may be ranked with 1880 as the two saddest years of his life. On the last page of his ’82 Diary is the following note, touching in its bare statement of a fact :

Preached only seven Sundays during the year.

CHAPTER IV

A CLEARING OUTLOOK

1883 seemed to open more promisingly, as far as his health was concerned.

January 7th, Sunday.—Preached at Pendref and Salem. Very much puzzled by the fact that none come to Christ anew now. Some unexplained mystery in this.

8th–13th.—Prayer meetings : no stir—rather flat. Ebb after tide (of some kind) of last year.

28th, Sunday.—Preached at Saron, 10 ; Bontnewydd, 6. A very wet and stormy day : my first from home after last relapse. Felt no worse. Thank the Lord !

March 11th, Sunday.—Preached, Pendref and Salem—stronger than usual. Thank God for restoring so much of my old power that seemed to be gone for ever.

18th, Sunday.—A snowy Sunday. Preached a short sermon at Pendref and Salem—a good sermon—but too humorous for pulpit.

In April he was at Pontselly for rest and change ; and this extract from a letter to his wife (April 21) helps us to follow him :

There is a *Cyfarfod Parotöad*¹ at Bryn Sïon now—Saturday night—but I am to say a few words to-morrow night ; so, am allowed to stay at home with *mam* [mother] to-night. . . . They are all pretty well here : *mam* wants me to tell you that they are all happy, but that she has aged more than a year since you saw her. She feels now that she is getting old. She wants to see you and Owen Herber this summer without fail. There is not much fun fishing here this time, and it must rain before I can catch many—but I catch quite as many as we can eat. I thought I was in for a cold on Tuesday, but it has all passed off very nearly. I feel the quietness of the place very much. The spring is only beginning—the earth and the garden are almost dead yet, although there are plenty of spring flowers everywhere, and the birds are singing in every direction. This week has passed very very soon—and the short holiday at this rate will soon be over. I, however, try to enjoy it. Our great mistake is, and it has been my mistake for years—to postpone enjoying life until some future time, instead of trying to enjoy it every day as it comes. Enjoy the *now* and not the to-morrow. I have really tried to do so these last six months, and so have grumbled and complained less than I used to. With the shadow of the Communion service here to-morrow, over me, I end this letter by praying God to bless you and the children and Mrs. Hughes, and watch over you all.

¹ 'Preparatory Meeting.' It is usually held—mostly in country districts—some afternoon or evening of the week before the monthly Communion Sunday. It answers somewhat to the English 'Church Meeting,' but is entirely devotional.

So the brief hurried notes in the Diary, and that one letter, carry us on till we come to May—fateful May!

21st, *Monday*.—Owen Herber has a little cold.

22nd, *Tuesday*.—He is worse.

23rd, *Wednesday*.—Better.

26th, *Saturday*.—About ten this night was told that I was on the eve of another great trial in May.

27th, *Sunday*.—My darling boy died, with his hand in mine, at twenty minutes to five this morning. What a shock! and so unexpected. God help his poor mother to bear it!—is my sincere prayer. I loved him most dearly: is it possible that I loved him too much? No, no: it cannot be a sin to love one's own children.

28th, *Monday*.—What a sad, quiet Sunday yesterday was! All my big trials come on the best day.

He found relief, as at other visitations of death, in a brief monologue—chastened, rising almost to acquiescence. Comparing this, in 1883, with the monologue in May of 1875, it is easy to see that the writer, like Vinet, has been in the 'school of Christ,' and is of it.

He came to our home when the earth was covered with snow, December 13, 1880; and it was a day of great joy throughout the whole family. His advent had created summer in midwinter. He left us when the sun had risen, on the first day of the week, when the sound of birds beginning their early concert was in the garden near by; and his flight turned our comfortable

home—although it was Sunday, in the month of May—into a ‘valley of weeping.’ We have shut the light of the sun out of the house ; and we would have felt kindly towards every bird that would hang its harp on the willow for the day !

We called him ‘Owen Herber,’ at his coming : because his grandfather, Owen Jones, was dear to me, and had trusted me with the best gift he possessed on earth : and ‘Herber’ was added by his father, because he was very unwell at the time and silently believed that his life was done. From that December till this May, we had the privilege of entertaining a little angel—which filled our home with the sun-smile of a better world. His smile enticed a smile, and his cry put melancholy to flight. His ‘*Dats*’ sufficed to scatter every cloud, and his laugh or his shout—his sound in the house—was music most effective to drive every evil over the threshold.

But because of all that, to-day the house is painfully quiet. Owen Herber has been taken away, and we have asked a hundred times—Why? why? But there is ‘neither voice, nor any to answer.’ Scores if not hundreds of letters, full of sympathy, are flowing in from friends, but all that they say is ‘Thou shalt know hereafter.’

We are sad for our sore loss, but we thank God for lending him to us for a brief season—no, for ever !—because Owen Herber is ours now, and ours as a little child for *evermore*. It has been well said that only those who have lent one back early to God possess an ‘immortal babe.’

In an old Bible in our family I remember the sweetest chapters opened of themselves, as it were, because a faded flower or leaf marked the place. The book of my life, too, opens naturally at some particular chapters, because a May-flower has been placed there for mark. And if these chapters will be richer to me and to others I must but pray—Make me very well content !

Our loss has paralysed our reason, and has brought us to our knees before the God of all comfort. It is said of the petrel that the storm drives it before it over the wild wide ocean, till it is at last hurt, and is grateful for refuge on the mast of some mid-ocean ship. So we, driven and beaten, cling to prayer.

From two of the many letters of sympathy which he received we select some passages, for the sake of their contents and of their writers. The first is from Dr. David Roberts, who, it will be remembered, had been his fellow-worker in the town, and who had during his sojourn travelled, before him, the road to Llanbeblig churchyard.¹

I can go very deeply with you, into the depth to which I was very sorry to see you had been plunged. I know well the taste o' the bitter cup which the Father has given you and Mrs. Evans to drink. The first of our darlings that have gone home before us, of the same age as your own darling, lies in Llanbeblig.

It is needless to say—Be comforted. Before the death of my little daughter, I never felt any doubt as to

¹ Not to be forgotten by readers of *Aylwin*.

the salvation of infants. But the Enemy tried to torment me with doubts like these : What had the Lord, in so glorious a place as heaven, for one so small ? An orange, or doll, or toy, would be of more value in her sight than all the glory of the Third Heaven ! But I remembered that He could effect as sudden a change in the souls of the dear little ones as in the bodies of the saints, 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.'

The other from Dr. William Rees—who admired him as much as he was admired by him—comes with calm sunset faith to supplement the sweet humanity of the other. He wrote after a long and painful illness, and, as it proved, within some five months of his death (November 8, 1883), at the age of 81 :

I know from my often experience of the like what must be your and your dear wife's grief under such a circumstance, and all I can say is, that I, like many hundreds with me, earnestly and profoundly sympathise with you and Mrs. Evans in your sorrow ; and would remind you of the old truth which we 'had from the beginning,' and which, especially at such a time, is better than an earthful of fine gold : viz., 'We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.' . . . For 'in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.' Yes, 'He is *able to succour*.' Others may feel with us, watch with us, condole with us, sorrow with us, but very little 'succour' can they give after all : but

He is able both to feel with us, and succour us, too. It was He, the great High Priest, who took the desire of your eyes from your bosom, to His own bosom, and He 'was touched with a feeling of your weakness' when He was so doing: and He will again succour and console you. . . . We cannot be *as* wholly certain of the eternal safety of anyone, as we can of the state of little children which die in their infancy—He shall carry 'the lambs in His bosom.' . . .

Yours, lonely, bereaved, and afflicted,

WM. REES.

What all these letters, on this occasion as on other like occasions in his life, prove so clearly is—the kind of love, sincere and anxious to help, which he had won from the best of his fellow-labourers. To have won it, and so much of it, attests his personal worth.

Once more he took up his burden, and, staff in hand, journeyed on. He soon became absorbed in a new movement. North Wales was being deeply stirred by the question of the location of its prospective University College. Among the towns competing for it was Carnarvon. He threw all his energy and influence, as a faithful and honoured citizen, into the effort. On August 14, he was summoned to London, with other members of the Deputation, to appear before the Privy Council, and state a case. This took place

on Friday ; and he spoke admirably for his town. Next morning he received a telegram that Mrs. Hughes—' Jenny's ' mother—was dead. ' Came home by morning mail—upset quite,' is the note in the Diary. And, to add to his distress, his wife's health was seriously affected. This he learnt within a day of his mother-in-law's funeral—and learnt at the same time other disappointing news : ' that the College was going to Bangor : felt it dreadfully.' There is no need to enter into the controversy here : he fancied at the time that Carnarvon had been sold, and sold by some whom he had the right to look upon as friends.¹ Probably his feelings misled his fancy : but that did not alleviate the immediate soreness, especially as he was living near actual death and in its unmoving shadow.

Sept. 1, Saturday.—Could not prepare sermon, anxious about my dear wife.

Sept. 9, Sunday.—Did not go to Penmaenmawr owing to my dear wife's illness.

However, the shadow began at last to move, and we have this changed tone :

Sept. 30, Sunday.—Preached at Pwllheli. My first Sunday from home for some time. *Very thankful.*

¹ This did not hinder his being elected member of the Council of the North Wales College, or his accepting the post, and actively serving the College to the close of his life.

The outlook brightens from there on to the close of the year, when we have this cheering entry :

Dec. 30, Sunday.—Preached very strong. Four came to Society.

1884 opens with a prayer that God may bless it. But once again His blessing as it came was in disguise. His throat gave him trouble in January, and he was several Sundays without preaching. In March he had to take his wife to London to consult a specialist; and he subsequently spent some quiet time at Bournemouth, preaching there on Sunday morning, April 6. This letter, the fruit of love made anxious, was written to her during her prolonged stay there, and is very true to the man :

Carnarvon, May 4, 1884.

My dear Annie,—It is Saturday night half-past nine, and I do not remember now that I ever wrote a letter to anyone at this hour. I have just looked over my *Anerchiad* (Address) for to-morrow morning—it is on the 34th chapter of Exodus—*Cymundeb â Duw* (Communion with God) and the great necessity for it : and also my night sermon, on Jesus Christ—they are not ready—but I know that I have good subjects to speak about—and so I feel at rest. I write to you because I love you, and thank God for you, and the pleasantest hour of every day is the one when I am writing to my Annie. It is no trouble, but a pleasure to me to write to one who has given herself to me, and I appreciate her

more and more from day to day. I pray for you every day, and God knows how I thank Him for you. It is very possible that you don't know how I value you, but I think I have given you plenty of those silent proofs of true love that ought to convince any woman that she is dearly beloved.—I often write to you letters full of jokes and playfulness—that are very natural between man and wife, but there is a deeper feeling than all that, which is only known to a true loving husband, who has found the true partner of his soul; and these feelings are often unexpressed. To-night, as I sat here, I thought of you and Mia¹ there, and felt it my duty to write a letter like this—a Saturday night letter—a Sunday! letter in a way, because the Jews began their Sunday the night before.

He had taken his daughter to school in London in January, and had found new interest, he writes, in seeing St. Paul's, Westminster Abbey, and other places, through his child's eyes. Some extracts from letters written to her at school will show the father's tender care, and the slow lifting of the cloud:

February 18th, 1884.

We were very glad to have your letters last week, and I thought somehow that your eye was better. You ought always to let me know if it get worse, at any time, so that we may see to it.

¹ His brother's wife—Mrs. Justin Evans.

I am to preach at Bangor next Sunday, in the new Welsh Chapel. So you see I am beginning to venture a bit from home again. I am very anxious to see March coming in, that I may have some fishing.

Carnarvon, May 2, 1884.

My dear Liz,—You cannot think how thankful I am to our Heavenly Father that your sight is not in danger. Your Mother was very short-sighted, but I never heard her complain that it was getting worse, so, when I heard you do, I was rather afraid ; and now I feel the more thankful after hearing the testimony of a London oculist. If you can find time to drop me a few lines to-morrow for me to get them on Sunday I shall be very glad. I am here all alone you know, and taking care not to complain in my letters to Mamma, for fear she should come home at once. . . .

I hope very much that you won't forget your Bible, and to pray to God to keep you pure. You are our only child, and we want you to be worthy of the respect we have won.

Carnarvon : May 13th, 1884.

My dear Liz,—I hope you could read the card I sent you yesterday. Your letter of last week was a nice letter, only I was surprised to find that my little daughter had been troubling her brain, on the great question why she is not so clever as the cleverest girls. It is an old question, Liz bach—we have all bothered ourselves with it. Why cannot I write poetry like Tennyson, or make a speech like Gladstone? ‘To some *He gave* five talents

and to some two and to some one.' I know of no other explanation. If you will make the best of what you have, you will do well.

By the end of July he was sufficiently confident of himself to go further afield. From Pontardulais in South Wales (July 28th) he wrote to his wife, who was at Pontselly :

We had a crowded meeting yesterday, and I had to preach morning and night, and did pretty well, but feel very tired to-day. But thank God it is over, and I am not ill. I am thinking now of this old Paper—tomorrow : then I shall run away on Wednesday. If you don't hear differently, send to meet me, to Cenarth, Wednesday evening.

The 'old Paper' that worried him was for a conference in connection with the Welsh Union meetings at Llanelly, on 'Our Duty as a Denomination in view of the Progress of Higher Education in Wales'; and in the course of it he strongly advocated the 'closest possible connection' between the Theological Colleges and the University Colleges. Among other suggestions, making for reform, he gave these :

I know that men of uncommon powers will be able, in the future as in the past, to overcome their deficiency in education—men like Andrew Fuller and John Bunyan in the English pulpit, like John Jones of Talysarn and

Hiraethog [Dr. Wm. Rees] in the Welsh pulpit. Men of genius like these, to-morrow as yesterday, will be above all law and rule. Nor do I on the other hand believe that a brilliant scholar can be made of every preacher that may be of great usefulness and blessing to his denomination and his age. But I am convinced of this, that the body of the ministers of our denomination must be far more highly, more excellently trained in the future than in the past, and that many of them ought to be recognised scholars, possessing high university degrees, and so fitted to meet the opponents of our religion and their arguments with cultured minds, edged by the best learning.

Referring with approval to Dr. Fairbairn's plea for a Theological Hall and a Nonconformist Pulpit in connection with Oxford and Cambridge Universities, he said :

The feeling is general that the days of the old colleges, where two or three tutors do their best to try and teach the students everything, are now numbered. All the better for the preacher, the more he has of *accurate* knowledge in every branch of learning ; and this is the age of the specialists ; thus it requires the best of the most brilliantly talented man to be a worthy teacher in one branch of knowledge. A strong teacher, so equipped, changes the students every time they appear before him ; and he creates thinkers. And men who are not thinkers themselves like to be addressed as if they were. If you doubt this, announce that you will preach the Sunday after your return to the ignorant and dull-

minded. I fear you would have a congregation worthy of the announcement—certainly none too numerous.

And again :

I believe it would be a great advantage for our students to come into touch with able young men of other denominations, and with those preparing for other professions in the National Colleges. 'Little worlds make little men'; there is a tendency in the little world of sect to make little men; and we have seen before now those who never knew a great man outside their own sect. . .

I know some argue that, if we send our students to these colleges, many of them will be lost: they will not return to the Theological Hall nor to our pulpits any more. My answer is ready: I would not give one farthing, the market price of a sparrow, for any young preacher that could be bribed from our pulpit, any lad that would weigh the advantages between the world and the pulpit: 'If I become a preacher I shall get 80% a year, perhaps more; but if a tradesman, I shall earn hundreds a year—what shall I do?' Very properly has Dr. Parker replied—'Don't go into the pulpit, you are not the man God wants; and you will make nothing of it there.'

It is pleasant to think of him once more with the marching army, and soon to be as much as ever at the head of it, himself led by the pillar of fire which, while its reflection fell softly on the shadows of death behind him, yet lighted up hope-

fully dim distant scenes. Among his December 'Monthly Notes' for that year are two: 'Looking Backward' and 'Looking Forward.' The burden of the first is: 'Make friends of every day, of every month, of every year; when you part with them, part as friends, that they may rise again to meet you in the future without scourge or frown.' The second we insert in full:

LOOKING FORWARD

We have just read of travellers on one of the mountains of the West, who had missed their way in the snow at night; and, after fighting with the storm, one gave up, and lay down to die. His comrades, by counsel and threat, tried their best to re-start him, but all in vain. The weariness and sleep, known to travellers in the snow, had seized on him, and he could make no more effort. He took out of his pocket a portrait of his wife and children, for a last look. That thoroughly roused him: he saw again his cosy home, and the cheerful faces of his loved ones. Upon this he put forth all his energy, started again, and reached home safely. Who has not sometimes lost heart in the midst of storms and disappointments? Who has not sometimes fainted, ready to give up every effort? The Saviour has provided for this also, by holding before us the home further on—in our Father's House—a home full of love and welcome—a home where every heart is kind, every face wears a smile—a home where everyone shall have what he will, and

do what he will ; for to be 'at home with the Lord' means all that. And has not the memory of this raised us to our work, and kept us from fainting? Moses, the great man, in the midst of his troubles, was forced to look at the picture of his home further on—'For he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.' And indeed, a greater than he, when He endured the Cross, was looking at the picture—'the joy that was set before Him.' When travel-worn, what better can we also do than look at the picture of our home to come—and the love-filled hearts that wait to welcome us there? The great purpose of mental quietude, with regard to the future and the past, is to leave us freer to do our duty and our work in the present.

CHAPTER V

THE *DYSGEDYDD*

DR. EVANS became joint-editor with the Rev. Robert Thomas (Bala) of the *Dysgedydd* in 1874. Without being the official monthly organ of Welsh Independency, it has rendered great services to the denomination since its start in 1821. Mr. Thomas died April 23, 1880. Two months earlier, in the illness of approaching death, he had written to comfort and cheer his co-editor (February 23), saying :

Do not think that you have broken down for a lengthened period. I feel certain that you will be better soon. You have yet much work in the world to do, and 'man is immortal till his work is done.'

And though the prophetic words remained unfulfilled for a longer period than either then anticipated, they helped to soothe a broken spirit.

It might seem as if the additional burden were inopportune, but it really served to take his mind along untrodden paths of meditation—as the wave

of the Menai promised him. His 'Monthly Notes' had been from the first—under slightly varying titles—a feature of the magazine. At first they were tentative, somewhat uncertain, but always readable. They dealt, in the early years, mostly with topics of the day ; but they gradually became less ephemeral, more certain, altogether richer. They reveal his many-sided sympathy, his alertness of mind and heart, and his fine art in bringing a thing home. They include personal incidents, sayings of notable men, descriptions of persons and places, notes in the key of irony and of comfort, memorial references—all of them borrowing distinctness from his own personality. A selection from these, covering the years of his editorship (1874-1896), has been made by his son-in-law (Rev. O. L. Roberts, Liverpool), and makes as readable, as living, a volume as anything in modern Welsh literature.

What we have translated for this chapter has been selected for its biographical interest, and with a view to showing him in varying moods :

THE SILENT MONTH

We now understand what Carlyle means by 'the eloquence of silence.' We know henceforth what that saying means—'Let us be silent that we may hear the whispers of the gods.' How true this is as regards the

only true God ! How keen the hearing grows to be in silence ! the ear grows thinner, as it were, to listen to the lessons murmured and whispered at its door. What resolutions are formed, what victories won, when the lips are closed, the tongue silent, and the soul is able to realise that she is beneath her Creator's eye ! God was obliged of yore to lead His Church into the wilderness—into silence—before she would listen to His words, till, in listening, she would 'sing' with rapture. 'Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably¹ unto her.' He still speaks after their own heart to those who—though in a wilderness—strain the ear to listen for His voice. Mr. Spurgeon says that the time spent before God in silence, the mind open to receive, as the open flower drinks in the raindrops—must strengthen and confirm the soul.

One great lesson for the most proud-spirited, when he is put aside for a month in silence, is—how easily everything goes on without him. How few the wheels that stop when the most essential man is removed ! As one beloved brother, who was often cornered by illness used to say : 'How quickly the world can spare one that has stepped out of the circle !' The circle, indeed, soon fills up, and someone else steps into the vacant place. . . . As Williams of Wern said in a chapel now in sight while we write : 'Thou imaginest that thou fillest a large place in this world, and that when thou goest there will be a tremendous gap ; but take my word for it, dear brother, there will not be one cart less in the streets of

¹ Welsh : 'after her own heart.'

this town because thou art dead.' It is an exquisite lesson in humility to feel how easily the great Master can do without us ; and if we will not do His work, how easily He can set us on one side. Let us do our work for God ; we will soon have retired from every other sphere, and will have been forgotten except by a loving few, with painful easiness, and that very soon. What matters it ? let us serve God, and we shall be in a sphere from which no one is removed, and in a service where everyone is for ever in remembrance.

Another of the whisperings of the silent month is, how dependent we are upon each other's sympathy. We will be pardoned here for referring to the hundreds of letters we have received—since we have not replied to one of them—and we simply give thanks for every sentence in every one of them, especially for their warm resolutions to the churches of Portmadoc, Pwllheli, Ruthin, and the brethren in London. Every letter has been carefully preserved, and we never before felt the value of the privilege of living in the affections of our brethren. We remember Mr. Davies, Cardiff, telling us, a little while before his death, that 'one of the effects of his lingering illness was to show him that the kindness and sympathy of his brethren were greater than he had ever thought, and if he would be permitted to live he would do his best to preserve their confidence and make much of them !' The strongest feels that the sympathy of the weakest helps him to bear his burden ; and it is in the power of every one, in every position, to alleviate to some extent the suffering of his fellow-men by

standing, as it were, beside his brother or sister, and taking their hand when bearing the cross. *Aug.* 1875.

ON SAYING 'OH !'

An eminent minister was in his study preparing his sermon for the Sunday, when his little boy came in, having hurt his finger, and held it up crying: 'Daddy, daddy, look, I have hurt it !' His father turned to him, in the midst of forming a sentence, and said in a ruffled tone, 'How can I help it, my child ?' The little one's eyes filled, and, going out disappointedly, he whispered quietly, 'Yes, you could say, Oh !' Alas, many of the world's big children, having turned away, with pain in their heart, added to the pain of their circumstances, for the want of one word of sympathy, have been ready to say, feeling sore like the child—Yes, you could have helped me by an 'Oh !' kindly said, and that was all I asked. That was an excellent resolve of the good man who said that 'he saw two great heaps in every neighbourhood, a heap of misery and a heap of comfort,' and that he would let no single day pass without trying to do something—one deed at any rate—to lessen the one and add to the other. How many of our readers will take this to be the motto of every day of their life—*To-day again, one deed to make the heap of misery less, the heap of comfort more ?* *Ibid.*

DEATH OF THE REV. DAVID THOMAS, B.A., BRISTOL

The first time we saw him was in May 1865, delivering his address as Chairman of the Congregational

Union in London. We had been only three years a minister, and the theme of the address was 'The Ministry ;' and we shall never forget some portions of his address that morning. We can now recollect his saying that Dr. Arnold had been on a visit to Scotland, and had returned declaring that 'the Presbyterian preachers were preaching *ad clerum* rather than *ad populum*—to preachers rather than to the people.' We have heard scores of sermons since, and we felt their great lack to be—sermons to preachers, and not to the people. We remember, too, the deep impression left upon our mind by the words 'It is not more soldiers we want, but better.' If we could, by conversions, double the number of our churches, that would carry less influence on the world than if the faith, love, and grace, of those that are already within, were increased. We have often since thought of these two remarks. Of course, it is better to have more soldiers, as far as it means the salvation of more, but it is very important to improve the soldiers that we have. It is well, too, to have an occasional preacher to preachers, but what is wanted is a preacher to the people ; and we are in great danger of thinking more of the sermon than of the people, and of attempting to preach a *good sermon* rather than do *great good*.

Our next recollection of David Thomas is as a hearer of the writer in Tottenham Court Road Chapel, on a Sunday morning. The first sight of him among the audience nearly overwhelmed the preacher ; and I know that I preached worse than usual that morning, because of 'the fear of man that bringeth a snare.' At

the close of the service, however, he came forward very kindly to thank me—that the sermon and the service had done him great good. Soon after this the writer was invited to preach the missionary sermon at Bristol. Mr. Thomas introduced the service for him ; and, at the close, in the presence of over half a hundred ministers, gave his fellow-countryman a most cheering word, so that he can never forget it. Heaven is a place to long for, when we remember that it is full of such characters. We also recollect him once listening to Dr. William Rees preaching in Welsh. Oh, how he enjoyed it ! He was all electricity in listening. The Doctor's genius stirred to its depths the genius of David Thomas. We are always accustomed to judge a preacher by watching him as he listens to another. If there is a flash in his nature, it will come out in hearing : but if a man has a face of dough in listening to all and sundry, we have an easy conscience in classifying him with those who will never themselves set anything or anybody on fire.

Dec., 1875.

THE BEE IN THE STUDY

I was busy writing my 'Note,' and wondering—what next ? But a bee has come in : there were flies about before, which had entered through the open window : I could write on comfortably—but this bee ! It has a sting, it must be driven out. No, write on, reason said : did you not know that the bee never stings any but those who attack it ? So ? said I : then it is much better than biped bees ! those will sting, and sting, the

men that never did them any wrong. Bah ! the bee again. It has alighted on the picture of Williams of Wern now ; it crawls across it, and as we watch it, we remember what Mr. Kilsby Jones when last here said of him—how *he* was stung by the wasps of his day and generation. Who were they ? Never heard their names—they had no names : only that some—wasps, that is all—had stung Williams of Wern ! Did they do harm to Williams and his name ? What ! wasps ? They filled their stings with poison : but it was themselves they killed. Here it is again : it must be got out of the room : it would be easy to kill it, but—no, not that ; there must be some good purpose for it and its sting : but who likes to live with it, we cannot tell : it must go out, or we give up writing. It is a heavy penalty for one to have to carry a sting all his lifetime :—everyone afraid of him when he is seen in a room, avoiding him if possible, opening for him to go out, and breathing freely when he has passed out of sight. The stinger among men is proud of being an object of attention—as this bee is an object of attention—although it is because everyone prefers its absence from a room to its presence. Sh-sh ! bee—out with it—thanks !

Sept., 1878.

TWO IMPRESSIONS OF CATHOLICISM

I

The city of Brussels was in mourning the day we arrived : it had buried its Mayor, a man of middle age, and much respected. When we entered the Cathedral

next morning, we soon discovered that the mourners were coming too, and that a memorial service was to be held. We sat away in the distance to muse, if not to worship. . . . We were there a stranger, not knowing a face ; but when we saw others weeping for the dead, the tears flowed naturally down our cheeks too—we felt we were a brother who could sympathise with them in their trouble. Here is another—we said—and the year of his honour has been turned into the ‘year of his great affliction.’ We spent an hour there full of marvelling thoughts about death, immortality, Jesus, the resurrection, Catholicism, &c.

We watched the people at their devotions. We are afraid many attend our chapels in Wales who never think of praying themselves. They sit down expecting the preacher to pray for them, but they do not consider that they also must themselves pray before the blessing is secured. The staring and the frivolity which are often seen in the congregations of our country, and that during the hour of prayer, have grieved us many a time—the eyes open, the head erect, looking round about, while the great God is being addressed. . . . The fear of God produces devotion in the attitude of the body, when in His presence. Look at these Catholics—*they pray for themselves*. We have now watched some hundreds of them : they do not come to church for someone else to pray for them : their faces and their attitude certify that they pray. *Pray* to images ? the reader may interpolate : perhaps so, but watch them all kneeling—their faces full of solemn emotion, of the longing of faith.

Who can tell but Heaven's great Ruler
Bends to listen to their cry,
And that He fulfils in mercy
Each regretful, mournful sigh?¹

If we know of a more excellent way, let us show it by our modest and lowly demeanour in approaching the great God.

II

We felt there was something striking in their custom of throwing the churches open the livelong day. As a rule, when we saw a church, we turned in; it was almost certain to be open, although there were far more things that could be damaged than in our houses of worship; and yet stealing or damaging anything is seldom heard of. Without a doubt, it was to us a beautiful sight to see many as they returned with their basket from market, turning into the church to pray; and if someone had half an hour during the day, he would turn in: and they appeared, to say the least, as though enjoying the act of worshipping. Undoubtedly, Catholicism has yet many lessons to teach Protestantism. We have, after watching them, come to think far more highly of many Catholics, though we think much less of Catholicism, and fear more than ever lest it should take possession of our country. We saw scores here and there at the confessionals, and waited to see the priest coming out of the cell; and our whole soul was stirred as we thought of the miserable people, full of broken

¹ From a Welsh hymn.

emotions, we saw approaching so commonplace a man, instead of obeying the invitation of Him who said—
'Come unto Me, all ye that labour.' *Aug., 1879.*¹

'AND HE CHANGETH THE TIMES AND THE SEASONS'
(Dan. ii. 21)

With George Eliot we feel that an occasional fine day in February has more of the charm of *hope* than almost any other day of the year. Everything foresees, as it were, the whole year to come. We saw yesterday the invalid out for the first time, and he seemed full of heart as he thought—The year is young, the day is lengthening, everything grows better : why should not I ? The birds seem to feel the same, their notes are as clear as the clear air itself. The ploughman we saw this morning in the field finishing his furrow gave a leisurely look round before beginning the next, happy because the year was before him. The early flowers already beautify the meadows. We have seen the snowdrop more than once this week, announcing like silver bells the advent of Spring. And the flowers of Summer, although they are far lovelier, are not nearly as charming as the first daisies and primroses of Spring. The first-fruits of the Spring are better than all that come after. Give us the first strawberries of the season : the year

¹ These two paragraphs are selected from a series of impressions of Paris, Antwerp, and Brussels. He was accompanied by his brother—Rev. W. Justin Evans. He had intended to proceed to Italy, but when friends dissuaded him, for health's sake, from Rome he dropped the intention. He said he preferred to be without Italy, if he must be without Rome.

never again bears any like the first. The charm of hope is associated with every first thing—what grows early in the year, before the first leaf begins to fade ; while as yet everything is, like the day, improving, like the sun, climbing higher and higher. *March, 1881.*

DR. PUNSHON IN HIS GRAVE

Death, for months past, has been verifying the old adage that ‘he loves shining lives to aim his shafts at.’ His arrow has just laid low the most eminent of Wesleyan preachers. We recollect well the first time we had the privilege of hearing this orator-preacher. While a youth in Liverpool, he preached one week evening in Dr. Raffles’s chapel ; and, though we hastened there, the building was too crowded for us to have a glimpse of him. We heard him, from the gallery stairs. His text was ‘Ye are bought with a price’ (I. Cor. vi. 20), and we shall never forget the impression some passages in the sermon left upon us. We had never before heard an Englishman so eloquent, so thrilling, exercising such mastery over the feelings of the audience. We heard him several times after that, but he did not seem to us nearly as fine, till we heard him preach his masterly sermon in Surrey Chapel for the London Missionary Society. . . . We remember him—gratefully—in his lecture on Wilberforce at the Music Hall, Swansea, when some man got up to leave, just as he was commencing his peroration. The speaker paused, in the middle of a sentence, and begged the man to stay five minutes ; and after he had sat down he commenced his

peroration again, and ascended from sentence to sentence, bringing the audience up to such *hwyl*, such enthusiasm, as to dismiss us when we did not well know what to do with ourselves.

May, 1881.

‘SHORTEN YOUR LINE’

While fishing in a stream, thickly wooded on either bank, with very little success, a quick-sighted brother called out to me: ‘Shorten your line!’ It was too long to manipulate; and after shortening it I caught five fish. Many of us need in life the same advice, as we seek to manipulate a line that would stretch over a week, a month, a year: the voice of the Great Teacher calls out to us—‘Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.’ Let us shorten our line and so do something well and successfully during the year now before us. It is folly for us to try and bear the weight of a year’s anxieties and duties: a day is enough. ‘As thy *days*, so shall thy strength be’; and not as thy weeks, or months, or years: nay, the common paraphrase is quite correct—‘According to thy day shall thy strength be.’ Not the same strength will be wanted every day in the year’s course, but according to thy day shall thy strength be!—the strength varying as the varying day. And what man was ever more in need of varied strength than Moses, who spoke these words? But he had strength according to each day—from the strength to weep so opportunely that he won the heart of Pharaoh’s daughter on the bank of the Nile, up to the strength to climb Mount Nebo, for his great soul to be translated

from his body with God's kiss—as the Hebrews have it. His days dawned, one after the other, for 120 years, and the strength came as surely from his God, from day to day. And whoever desires a happy new year in 1884, we again offer him the veteran angler's advice—*Shorten your line!*
Jan., 1884.

We have already, for the purposes of biography, quoted more than once from another interesting and suggestive series of articles he published in his periodical from time to time, entitled 'Sabbaths Here and There.' They are descriptive in form, with excellent summaries of prayer and sermon, as a rule, and altogether generous in tone. The analysis is shrewd, the appreciation ungrudging. They include such well-known names as Mr. Spurgeon, Dr. Parker, Dr. Dale, Dr. Allon, Dr. Maclaren, Dr. McGregor (Edinburgh), Dr. William Pulsford, Henry Ward Beecher, and Dr. Raleigh. But it is characteristic of his large-heartedness that some of the kindest articles deal with men less known. Indeed, he confesses with regard to one of them, that he had never heard of his name till he found himself in the town for the Sunday—during his broken years. It is all the more remarkable, when we consider that most of these were written, or at least prepared, while he himself was God's invalid general watching the victory, but helpless to join in the battle. In the whole

series we have only discovered one ruffled note : and that may have been justified under the circumstances. He was entering one of the best-conducted of churches, when some official stopped him, and told him he might find room in the gallery. Should anyone wish to know what is said of that particular exercise of duty, he may do so—by learning Welsh, and searching in twenty-two volumes of the *Dysgedydd*. Did not Bishop Magee once, when some soup had been clumsily spilt over his coat, exclaim—‘Is there any layman who would kindly express my feelings in suitable language?’ Dr. Evans’s appreciation of that church and its minister was none the less cordial.

PART IV.

CLOSING YEARS

(1885-1896)

‘It shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light’

CHAPTER I

‘STARTING LIFE ANEW’

HE had, towards the close of his earlier period, an historic sermon on Gen. viii. 20—‘And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord ; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar’—*Starting life anew*.¹ He, too, had at last seen the abating of the waters ; he had now seen ‘the olive leaf pluckt off ;’ he was out again in a ‘new world,’ his altar already built.

His first ‘Monthly Note’ for 1885 is on the necessity of taking rest, quoting Lowell’s advice :

Run if you like, but try to keep your breath ;
Work like a man, but don’t be worked to death.

And, among other things, he says that he himself, like many more, had been forced to learn the way to prolong life by keeping the Scriptural counsel—‘Do thyself no harm.’ But he saves his

¹ This, in Welsh idiom, is—‘Starting the *world* anew.

soul, so to speak, by reminding himself that there is to be no holiday on earth from God's work :

Moses and the prophets, the apostles, and their true successors in every age, died in harness. The sphere may be changed, but the work can neither be left nor given up.

This was the spirit in which he restarted : this was the spirit that upheld him through the increasing labours of the years that followed.

In his own church they proved to be years of comfort. Before the close of 1885 the last of the first band of deacons passed away—'a son of consolation, a beloved brother, mighty in counsel and in prayer.' But he had the devoted and enterprising support of the new generation of leaders and members. In October of that year, on the twentieth anniversary of his pastorate, Dr. Evans, in the course of a powerful sermon on 'Looking unto Jesus,' thanked God for their happy intercourse together, and for the success which had crowned their labours : 'he believed that God had used him as an instrument to bring hundreds, throughout the land, to Christ, and he expected to meet them at the journey's close, somewhere within the shining cloud of witnesses ; and that night he would say to his living hearers, from the pulpit which he had occupied for twenty

years, “Look unto Jesus.” That was a gospel years and losses could not change.’ In the ‘Society’ afterwards, it was unanimously and heartily agreed that he should be released from his pulpit for three or four months during the following year, in view of his occupying the Chair of the Welsh Union.

In his engagements away from home he was obliged to measure his strength carefully. He avoided the *cymanfa* field ; he stipulated as to the number of times he was to preach at a ‘big meeting.’ And yet, as this bright-hearted letter to his daughter shows, were he an ordinary man, his life could scarcely be called easy-going !

Carnarvon : May 20, 1885.

What a week I had of it, after I left you ! I awoke at 4 on Tuesday morning to learn that speech,¹ and I quite forgot parts of it afterwards. (We’ll send you a copy before Sunday. We had only one and sent for more.) Then I delivered it, and felt a wee bit excited. After attending other meetings—I went to Mr. Morley’s house. He has promised 1,500*l.* towards our bringing Bala College to Bangor. Then from there I drove to the train and home. Then made a speech and went to the funeral,² where I delivered it in the *open air* to 3,000 people.

¹ For seconding a memorial resolution referring to the death of Dr. Thomas Rees, who should have occupied the Chair of the Congregational Union that May.

² Of the Rev. E. Stephens, Tanymanian.

Then off to Liverpool and preached twice there on Sunday to crowded chapel. Then at 10.45 at night of same Sunday I started home and reached here by half-past five in the morning and saw Mamma peeping from the window. Then to a funeral and read part of the service IN Llanbeblig Church! *There's you!* To-night I am deciding not to go for M.P. but to remain a preacher!¹ Mamma is not quite the thing—I may send her off in a bandbox to Pontselly next week.

Next month (June 4) he preached at Aberystwyth, in connection with the Welsh Union assembly. Since his breakdown, he was never more himself than that Thursday morning; and it sealed his restoration to public life. His address from the Chair of that Union was given at Aberdare (July 28, 1886), on 'The Answer of Christ to the Questions of the Age.' He reminded his hearers of the Autumnal Session of the English Union which he had attended, at the same town, in 1859, and how, out of 56 speakers taking part in those meetings, only six had survived. The address itself was a plea for Christian

¹ The reference to his 'deciding not to go for M.P.' chronicles another mark of confidence and honour conferred upon him. He was invited to become the Parliamentary candidate for the Carnarvon Boroughs. His fellow-Liberals had come to look upon him as their leader, in any doubtful struggle or forlorn hope. He refused the offer, but made it possible for Mr. Lloyd George to be selected and elected—and nothing in his political career gave him more gratification than that, as will appear again,

Socialism : there is no need to add it was a live speech. It lacks unity, may be, through attempting to cover too wide an area. Possibly it was written when the alarm of Anarchy was too acute in his mind. Its background is more English than Welsh. Some of the ‘sly hits’ were very well aimed, though they were of the day, and therefore to some degree for the day. We will give two quotations : one, in his lighter manner, where he is speaking of the danger of helping a man into the pulpit because he had no talent for anything else :

What can be heavier punishment upon a country like Wales, than for it to be abandoned to small preachers, who cannot wonder themselves, nor ever make anyone else wonder? or as Ap Vychan [Rev. Robert Thomas] once said after listening to one of that class—‘He has never seen a spirit in his life.’ No, such men must rub their eyes and awake before they can see at all ; and as for seeing ‘marvellous things’ out of the law or of the world—there is no danger ! Their superlative praise is—*Not bad, really ! . . .* It is impossible to make a great preacher except of a great admirer. Not that he should admire the same thing as you and I, but that he should admire something up to wondering, and leap in surprise before some ‘spirit’ of an idea ! And certainly no man ought to be asked into the pulpit, if he cannot rise above *Not bad, really !*—because the three words will be an exact description of him and his deeds.

The next quotation is in his other, loftier manner :

Jesus Christ—the first philanthropist ! He spent His life in the streets, in the midst of the people—in the highways and fields frequented by the poor. He took their little children in His arms, and blessed them, so that He won every mother's heart : He heard the cry of the blind beggar by the wayside, and gave him a world for gift in opening His eyes, so that he won all the miserable to Him : He saw the widowed mother, who could not through her tears see Him, following her son's body to the burying-ground, and gave her more than the world in giving her back her son, alive and well, from death's grasp—to show how He desired to reunite every family. And in the anguish of His death, He could not forget that the thief was a man ; He saw through his repentance the ideal man he would be ; and as He promised—‘To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise,’ He taught that ‘the tears of the penitent are angels' wine.’ Though homeless Himself for months, He remembered to give His mother a home the night of His crucifixion. Though He was as pure as the light Himself, yet He was the readiest to make allowance for sinners whom society would stone to death. In all His life there is not a single selfish deed ; all of it was a sacrifice to help man ; and His willing death was only the highest altar-stair of self-sacrifice which He had long climbed—how long, who can tell ? And at last behold Him fall, a victim upon the altar, to convince the ages—‘God is love’—and make the *Cross* for ever the noblest word in any language.

In the early summer of 1887 he received the degree of D.D., from Miami University, Ohio. In August he was in Scotland; and no holiday lingered more pleasantly in his memory. He describes, with thankful delight, a Sunday at Gilmerton with Dr. Stalker. He was specially moved by Dr. Stalker's prayer, and his intercession for the minister of the church: ‘He is old, but Thy servant still in his old age; and though he may lose his power to serve men, he will never lose his power to be Thy servant.’ On this he remarks:

The aged minister sat next to me, and when the preacher prayed so tenderly for him, we noticed how he was moved with emotion, and how tears flowed down the cheeks furrowed with the storms and winters of eighty years; and we determined at the time that we would never again forget to pray for the minister of the place we might be at, especially if he should be old, and conscious of failing strength.

What became a formal resolution that morning, had been, we venture to affirm, his all but invariable practice throughout his life.

Before returning into the midst of life's polemics, we may tarry with him a little longer as he muses on his way to Abbotsford on a Saturday afternoon:

A feeling of sadness came over us as we thought that it was days which had vanished and men who had gone

that made these places we visited famous. We cannot look up and gaze on the blue sky without remembering that it had looked down on those who lived the history of these districts. The blue distance ! We behold it yonder beyond the Eildon Hills—three mountains peaked like the Eifel in Carnarvonshire. But the blue distance looks down on the mountains, on the ancient monastery, on the fine mansions, on the river that winds among uninterrupted forests as in the days of yore. How often Scott and his comrades gazed upon the same scene ! The blue distance ! . . . Between us and it are a few white clouds like wings of angels, which look so happy in their motion :

Without hurry, without rest,

or as Wilson says :

Even in whose very motion there is rest.

Is there not some likeness between this view of the blue distance and the view of our past years ? The joy we tasted, like yonder lovely vale ; the sorrow and grief, like yonder steep rugged hills ; and all half-hidden by time as with a beautiful mist. But in memory's review some incidents stand out, like the ripe wheatfields in golden array, which we espy here and there between us and the distant blue.

Later that year he was called upon to try his fortune at the ballot-box once more. As he had championed the Nonconformist cause in the education struggle of 1874, he was pressed into the

same cause again for the first County Council election, in January 1888. He published at the time some most racy ‘pages from his diary,’ giving his electioneering experiences:—in them we have, amusingly pictured, the ‘old lady’ who slammed the door in his face, much to the surprise of his companions till he explained that he had found himself one day in the street without a penny in his pocket, and so could neither give her an alms nor convince her that he refused because he had nothing;—and, again, the Churchwoman who gave him and his companions the most high-churchy look he ever saw: “‘King David!’” as Price of Aberdare used to say, ‘what a face, what eyes, what a look! no wonder she was an old maid!’ It speaks well for canvasser and canvassed, that, with some three exceptions of this kind, his reception, even where a promise was refused, was pleasant and cheerful; and he felt convinced that many Churchmen voted for him. When canvassing was over (which he in no measured phrases condemns) a reporter told him, with all the definiteness that comes of irresponsible omniscience, that he would be at the bottom of the poll:

Upon hearing this I went home to read Victor Hugo’s *Last Days of the Condemned*. . . It is a very profitable book to read in any crisis of mental pain. Before I was half-way through the book—it is not long—I felt pretty

thankful, because that I might have been in worse plight. This powerful book had been in the house for years and we had read it superficially ; but it was to-day it repaid us for buying it, and the owner entered into the spirit of the wretched sufferer portrayed in it !

Later, we have this ‘ page ’ :

January 23rd.—It is ‘ Society ’ night : no ministerial duty has been neglected during this struggle. I have been in my pulpit seven successive Sundays, and many have given themselves to Christ during these last weeks. Some very much feared that the electoral struggle would tell on the preaching, but they have seen it was a mistake. It is surprising how careful some are to shut the preacher in his pulpit. And what would have become of Wales if many a preacher had not taken part in politics, and in educating the people in political matters ? If Paul could make tents as well as preach, cannot we do some temporal good to the people outside the pulpit ? And if the church should take no interest in what affects humanity, it cannot expect humanity to take interest in what affects it. For that matter, I do not remember any straightforward Liberal who doubted my duty to stand for the seat—not as a preacher, but as a man and Christian citizen.

January 24 was election day : he spent most of it in the polling-booth : and we can believe it, that no polling-booth was ever brighter for twelve hours :

I told them every humorous story I knew, to keep them all in good temper. Every one of the four candidates laughed heartily at times ; but it was too like the whistling of a boy in passing the churchyard—laughing to forget fear. I told them I advised them to follow my example and study the advantages of being out of the Council. It is a fact that the one who was most certain of being in of my two opponents was lowest on the poll :—a gentleman of good heart and sanguine temperament, who had worked hard and believed everybody.

When the verdict was declared, it was found Dr. Evans had once more fought and won.

Another undertaking became necessary at Salem, in 1890—the enlargement of the chapel, and the addition of an organ. From April 20, of that year, to March 11, 1891, he held his services in the Guild Hall. These few diary entries have to do with this period :

April 20th.—Preached the last time at Salem before its renovation. The new debt is a heavy burden.

27th.—Preached at the Guild Hall—a very successful Sunday.

28th.—I heard the cuckoo on my return from Bontnewydd, on the high road, with my pocket full of trout caught that morning.¹ How glad and surprised I was !

¹ Is this a bit of genuine superstition, or only a polite bow to the gods of childhood ? The former, I think.

She is interesting, because she makes herself scarce. Even a Spurgeon is obliged to go away for a while, in order to arrest and keep attention. We Welsh preachers chatter all through the year, and become like sparrows.

November 2nd.—I began my 26th year's ministry by preaching at the Guild Hall twice, the chapel not being ready for re-opening. It was a powerful Sunday, with good attendances, although many were ill. We have had a long spell of peace now, for which I am truly thankful. We are working, so there is no time for disputing. The Bala row is dying out of the churches ; and I trust we have had enough quarrelling for one generation.

March 11, 1891.—The organ of Salem was opened to-day with great success. A great burden fell off my heart when it was over. I was nervously afraid of some catastrophe—of the organ loft falling, or something. Thank God, all passed off better than our most sanguine expectations.

March 15th.—The first Sunday at our enlarged chapel was a very pleasant one. It rained a deluge in the morning, but Mr. Pugh thoughtfully sent up a closed carriage for us, and we found a good morning congregation. At night it was crowded, and it was a joyful service, two remaining in the 'Society.' We were very happy at Bryn Seiont that night, and very thankful to our God.

At the re-opening services in April Congregationalism was represented by Revs. Dr. John Thomas and O. R. Owen; Calvinistic Methodism by

Principal Edwards; Wesleyanism by D. Richards; and the Baptist denomination by Dr. Owen Davies. Advantage was taken of the occasion by friends outside the church—inspired by Dr. Thomas and Rev. L. Williams—to present him with an address, in recognition of twenty-five years of service. More money was immediately received than was deemed necessary for the address: so they gave him a study-desk, a set of Ruskin’s works, and a purse of gold. In the course of his reply he said:

The kindness I have received in this town has made me one of its most loyal citizens: I love its inhabitants, its freedom, its fine old castle, its noble scenery. I have preached in every one of its chapels what I apprehended to be the Gospel of Christ, ‘as much as in me is’—to use what Paul once wrote. . . . I go from home occasionally—not often—in order that the congregation might hear the Gospel as it is in other men. I must confess I have often preached the Gospel very ineffectively, though I have always endeavoured to preach to the best of my ability. I know like others what it is, occasionally, to perspire more in the pulpit than in preparing for it. I know what it is to preach an indifferent discourse with great noise if not great power, but so ashamed was I of the performance that I remained in the pulpit until I saw the last of the congregation pass out. Then I came down resolved, by God’s help, to do better next time—to reach nearer to my preacher’s ideal, and, in the words of Emerson, utter ‘the best speech of the best soul.’

He repeated a part of this penitential confession in his address from the Chair at Bradford : but if everyone had as little ground for wearing the white sheet as he, it would not go ill with him. I have it on the testimony of those who would not volunteer vacant praise, that his preaching at home during those latter years showed no sign of decline. One of those accustomed to hear him on Sunday mornings at Pendref declares that he often preached there more effectively, in his judgment, than ever on the field of *cymanfa* ; and, further, that his prayers were frequently even more marvellous than his sermons.

May came—his dark month—but in 1891 it came in its more poetic guise. Under May 10, in his ‘Perennial Diary,’ we have this retrospective note for 1875 :

This is the date that clings to my memory. It was the dark Monday in 1875—when Jenny left me unwillingly for heaven.

On the next page, for 1891, is this :

The first entry on last page was a Monday sixteen years ago. To-day I was called up to London to accept the greatest honour our denomination can give. I was elected, in my absence, to be Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. I hardly ever ex-

pected this. The other day I took my wife to see the small place where I was born ; the humble cottage is now fallen : it was a very small beginning. And why should I not be more ready to believe that my Heavenly Father has led me on to this great opportunity to serve Him? During the week in London, I was so excited that I could not realise all it meant. To-day (May 16), I began to feel the burden of the responsibility. God helping me, I have vowed never to do anything unworthy of my brethren. The newspapers are full of praise ; but they do not make me vain, not one whit ; but they do make me grave, and create within me a deep sense of responsibility. I say to myself—‘I stand now very high, God keep me from falling down, and help me ever up to Him !’

Then he adds on the page for May 16 :

I returned home from London last night. We felt very thankful at prayers this morning for God’s great goodness. The view outside is very mixed : the mountains have been suddenly covered with snow, and the fields are clad in all the beauty of May. My feelings are just as mixed : I fear the burden of my new office lest I should break down again. I think much of Dr. Thos. Rees, who was like me elected to the Chair, but never lived to occupy it. If it be so with me, every Welshman will dread the Union Chair ever afterwards. God give me wisdom not to worry, to prepare calmly, and to go through this work again, in His strength and for His glory !

We will follow him, as by a private path, before he reappears in life's thoroughfare, while he tells us of a 'Visit to Dr. Owen Thomas,'¹ in Liverpool (June 1891):

The fact that the Whitsun 'General Society' was under necessity to pass a vote of sympathy with the above eminent and beloved man in his illness has caused many to think of him, and remember our great debt to him. We have been for years one of his chief admirers. We will never forget his sermon at Swansea while we were at the Preparatory College there. He became to us a great preacher that night, and he is to remain on the list of true masters of assembly. We have heard the principal preachers and orators of this age in both languages, we can admire all gifts and powers, but we would prefer not mentioning the number on the list in which the above preacher stands. As one indebted to him, we paid him a visit on Whitmonday. It is worth while calling in his house to see his library. It is the largest, of any minister's we have ever seen, and contains most valuable books. . . . He was much better than we expected to find him ; and we told him, if it were possible to bring him to Wales, and for him to preach, he would soon be better.

¹ Brother of Dr. John Thomas. It is curious to note that both Dr. John Thomas and Dr. William Rees had each a famous brother in the Calvinistic Methodist pulpit. The Methodist *Cymanfa* in Liverpool is fixed for Whitsuntide, that of the Independents for September.

July 16 has this entry :

Read a paper at the International Council in London.
Went with my brother same night to call at Spurgeon’s.
His illness has shown him how dear he is to the public.
A great and good man.

The subject of his breezy paper was on ‘Congregationalism as affected by the State Church in Wales.’¹

¹ See *Record of Proceedings*, pp. 167-170, and the reference to his ‘sixty-seconds speech, p. 390.

CHAPTER II

1892 : 'THE GREAT YEAR'

THE first entry—apart from one or two unimportant details—in his 'Perennial Diary' under 1892 is this :

February 2nd.—Spurgeon died last night at Mentone : went home on a Sunday night, after a splendid day's work. What deaths we have had this year, already !—Duke of Clarence, Cardinal Manning, Spurgeon. I would far prefer to be Spurgeon in my life and end. He is called to-day, the 'Last of the Puritans' : is this possible ?

He was, as Chairman of the Congregational Union, selected to attend the funeral ; and it happened most fittingly that two such sons of eloquence should, as it were, meet once again on that last halting-ground where the Veil casts its solemn, luminous shadow. He was himself profoundly moved, and as profoundly moved the vast audience. In the description of the 'Memorial Services at the Tabernacle,' given in the *Sword*

and Trowel (March 1892), we have the following paragraph :

'What touched you most in the meeting?' was the question addressed to several persons. 'The Orphans' singing,' said one; 'the sight of the coffin,' a second; 'Herber Evans's speech,' was the answer of a third. Truly, the emotion of the meeting reached flood-tide during [his] address. As Dr. Herber Evans, Chairman of the Congregational Union, himself almost reaching his native Welsh *hwyf*, drew, in pathetic tones, a charming picture of the 'Spurgeon of history,' who could not be buried, who would live in the hearts of those whom he loved so well, and 'gave his life to save'—tears came to nearly every eye. A moment later, strong men sobbed like little children, when he added, 'Many a man from distant parts will come to that grave and will say, "I read his words far away in my distant home, and they turned me to Jesus; and I vowed that, when I came to London, I would drop a tear over his grave. It is not a tear of sadness; but it falls as naturally as April rain when I think of him."' Mothers will take their children to that grave, and tell them quietly the name of the man that turned them homeward, and changed their earthly home to a place of peace.' We should like to quote many other passages in this marvellous oration, especially that bit about Mr. Spurgeon's advantages of birth and training: but we must forbear.¹

¹ The oration is given in full in the Memorial Volume—*From Pulpit to Palm-branch*. This is the passage referred to above: 'I have heard it said, too often to please me, of late, that Mr. Spurgeon

The Rev. David Davies, of Brighton, writing at the time of Dr. Evans's death, says :

How well I remember him weeping like a child, and making everyone else weep like him, over Mr. Spurgeon's coffin in the Metropolitan Tabernacle ! With what joy have they exchanged greetings before now ! In many respects how much alike they were—big children of Nature with grand human emotions and sympathies, and all set on fire by the love of Christ.

The entry in his Diary under February 10 is : 'Took part in Spurgeon's funeral : spoke to more ministers and preachers, at once, than I ever did before—some 5,000. God helped me, and I have received many letters since, thanking me for what I said.' This is followed on the next page by another entry : 'On my return from Spurgeon's funeral, I began in earnest at my address for May. I had prepared for it, but was hesitating about my subject. I now began, and hope I am on the right track.' In early March we find him, in retreat, at Llandudno, still occupied with his address. 'It

had no great advantage of birth and training. I do not believe that. Was it not a great advantage to be born of godly, prayerful parents ? Was it not a great advantage to be able to trace his pedigree back for two hundred years to a martyr for Christ in Job Spurgeon, and to a long and unbroken line of preachers who preached because they believed in the Gospel ? From such a line came this grandest preacher of the age, who preached the Word of God without a single hesitation, and who preached all of it.'

was cold,' he writes, 'and snowing for days ; terrible weather—but the very weather for me : it kept me at my work.' By March 24 the ghost of the Chair was laid, and we have this entry, buoyant as a child's mood :

After breaking the backbone of my address for May, I went out to fish, with 'Bontnewydd,'¹ and caught a dozen—one more than he did ! The tackle had not been opened since I was sent from Pontselly by dear *mam*.

The next entry is in another mood, and shows how recent he kept his impressions, by constant revision, up to the very last :

March 28th.—It is Monday, and the country is covered with snow. When out fishing last week I thought snow was over. How unwillingly the winter yields to spring in the material as well as the moral world ! I preached yesterday on 'What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God ?' There is a change even here : they don't seem to believe in eternal punishment any longer : anyhow, they don't fear it.

We are back again among the fresh instincts of the child's heart which he never neglected, as we read (April 4) :

¹ Rev. L. Williams, intimate friend and neighbour, already mentioned more than once : they had many amusing competitions in angling.

Found the first nest, the thrush's, with an egg in it. All interest in other nests is now over. It is in the first of everything we are interested : the first flower of spring, the first swallow, the first song of the cuckoo. We soon get tired of the most interesting of Nature's sounds.

How quick the emotional transition to the comment for the next day (April 5) !—

Attended the funeral of Mr. Richards, the Wesleyan minister. He preached at the opening of our Chapel [April, 1891]. His funeral showed that he had more influence than I thought. He was not a great man, nor a good scholar, but he must have been a good man. Character always tells. He had not lived long enough in town to make enemies ; he confined himself to preaching, and, like many Wesleyans, hid his political opinions. It would have paid me to do so, and paid well ; but I have always considered it my duty to help to bring in the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

I looked upon that coffin to-day with great seriousness, thinking of myself placed so, under the pulpit I had preached from : the work done, and the crowd reviewing it in their minds. Four of us, ministers of the town, walked together, and talked about books, and tried to shift from ourselves the solemnity of the warning to us. How ready we are to think all men mortal but ourselves !

The Address reappears once more :

April 12.—This morning at 11 A.M. I finished my Address. The hardest bit of work in connection with it

was to strike out three illustrations, as unworthy of the dignity of the occasion. There is such a thing as the 'dignity of dulness,' and I know now that I am going to sail perilously near to be wrecked on that rock. Anyhow, I thank God that it is finished.

May came, and its burdensome week—'the big week' of his Chairmanship. We need scarcely be told that when he went up on the Saturday to London he was full of anxiety, especially as the atmosphere was anything but clear, owing to the election of Secretary. He adds, however: 'All passed better than I expected: God gave me wisdom and considerable coolness.' He spent the Sunday morning at St. James's Hall, and heard Mr. Mark Guy Pearse; he stayed also for the Communion, and much enjoyed it: 'Returned again to a Conference on "Gambling"; had a talk with Hugh Price Hughes. He is a brave man, and a worthy Welshman.' Then under Tuesday (May 10), the 'great day of the feast,' we have these remarks:

This was the biggest day in my life. I had to face a City Temple crowded audience, as Chairman of the Union. God knows that I never believed I would reach this position. It was a grand sight! God helped me in answer to the prayers of thousands. I did my very best.

How I did enjoy the relief that it was over, and the quiet dinner after ! . . . Great enjoyment is only possible after great anxiety. The great tribulation on earth will sweeten even Heaven itself.

His Address had for its subject 'The Free Churches and their opportunity.' The opportunities he dwelt on were—intensified faith, united action towards social reform, co-operative missionary enterprise, and a comprehensive struggle for complete Christian liberty and equality. It is marked rather by practical good sense than by rare outbursts of eloquence. He probably felt restraint both from the office, as hinted above, and from his reading closely. That it was effective in many ways, and well received by all, goes without saying : but to rank it with one of his great occasions would be to leave a false impression upon the minds of those who never heard him but that once. We will recover a few of its passages where he seems to be his freer self. Commenting on ecclesiastical statistics in Wales, he said :

The chapter of counting heads is certainly an advance on the one immediately preceding it, when heads were broken, and not counted, in collecting tithes.

Speaking of the needed quickening of faith, he remarked—

Every new earth in the past has come by the way of heaven, and the new earth we are working for and longing for must come by the same way.

No kingdom is sure to any man or men for long unless they know that 'the heavens do rule.' [Dan. iv. 26.] Is not this true of nations? Is it not true of religions? It is the religion which creates the strongest faith that 'the heavens do rule' which is to possess the future. Is it not quite as true of Churches with their mission? The Church of the largest faith that 'the heavens do rule' is the one that reigns and has the widest kingdom.

In reference to Biblical criticism, after asking, 'Is not the trembling of many hearts lest the Philistines should take away from us the Bible a sign of great weakness of faith?' he proceeds :

The greatest danger to the Bible is for it to become a neglected book and thrown aside with indifference. The Higher Criticism is only another mode of keeping up the ever-living interest in the Book of books. Other books are mastered once for all, and placed on the highest shelf in the library, and often need dusting. But this one book is a study to-day for vigorous criticism, for acute philology, for philosophic inquiry. It keeps its place on the student's table from age to age, and won't be placed on the shelf.

'I like to look at the good work that is going on in every direction,' he said in another place,

while commending the duty of seeing over the hedges, 'and I have learnt not to be an alarmist.'

Let us all be one as the rainbow ; with our colours distinct, but blending like that bow of promise : a bow without an arrow, blessing all but hurting none.

He, 'a child of the village,' was not likely, were it on the ground of loyalty alone, to forget the village chapel :

The first Churches did not neglect the villages, and we must not. Jesus Himself was from the village, and there was not one of His apostles from the metropolis, Jerusalem—not even Judas ! They all came from the villages.

Dwelling on 'Christ the hope of glory' as having 'altered the possibilities of human nature,' he made this appeal :

Men lack hope everywhere, and our marching orders are, Take it to them. Hope for the slave in his chains ; hope for the imprisoned women in the harems ; hope for the aged poor who are thrown aside like an old broken harp ; hope for the lost, for all. 'The field is the world,' go and take possession of it ; sow it through with the white seed of hope, which shall spring up into a great harvest of joy, and everlasting life.

By Thursday he felt his burden gone, and 'began to buy fishing flies for Pontselly.' He and

his wife arrived there on the Saturday night, 'glad to reach there and to know that we were at rest for a week.'

May 15th.—This and the following day were days of heaven upon earth. I never felt more thankful to my Heavenly Father. We went fishing in the meadows, and drove about in a wee carriage sent up for us by Stephen Morgan. Annie does enjoy Pontselly, and deserves it. She is a splendid wife : may she live after me, and God bless her !

Writing to the Rev. William Pierce, under the same date, he says :

This is the quietest nook I know of on God's earth. My brother is deacon at the old chapel, Bryn Sïon, where I was received a member—I won't say how many years ago. All jogs on here just the same—no hurry ! At 10 (to-day) Sunday school, at 2 sermon, at 6 singing meeting ! It is truly a 'quiet resting place.' It has been my harbour of refuge in all storms. It was here I came for a month when very ill ten years ago, and if anyone then prophesied that I would be able to go through last week's duties, I never would have believed him. I feel very thankful to God for all His help, and for the cheer which came to me from my brethren, you among them.

He was present and spoke at Dr. John Thomas's Jubilee meetings, May 25. In the

present case, that meant the celebration of the veteran leader's fifty years in the Christian ministry. Dr. Thomas was at the time in indifferent health ; and although the enthusiasm of the meeting and the affection of his many friends revived him, it was only for a brief interval. He was removed in the end of June to Colwyn, to a house called *Uwch y Dôn* (' Above the Wave '). Next week Dr. Evans called to see him, on his way to the Welsh Union meetings at Ferndale (July 4-7). It was the last meeting and parting as of another Elijah and Elisha ; and the picture shall be preserved as it was drawn by the disciple :

When I entered the room where he lay on the sofa, he sat up to welcome me. I shall never forget his look. He looked at me from eternity ! That is what I said on reaching home, and I cannot change the phrase.

We were in the midst of an important election struggle, and many were afraid Mr. Lloyd George would lose his seat. He was a great believer in him ; indeed, he was the first to call attention to him as a possible member for the Carnarvon Boroughs. With his keen glance he said : ' You go back, my laddie, and put Lloyd George in Parliament : there will be plenty without you at Ferndale. ' And after a moment he added : ' There is a new Wales in sight, you go home and do your part again in bringing it in. There was a conveyance at the door, awaiting him to go out for a drive as usual. I said to him, ' I will go back, as you bid me, and will do my

best. Farewell.' I knew I was certainly obeying his last request, and bidding him final farewell at Uwch y Dôn, until we meet where there shall be neither pain nor 'wave' any more.

Thursday of the following week, 'very early in the morning,' this unwearied and intrepid leader had fled far 'above the wave.' The telegram announcing his death came to Dr. Evans among the strawberries in his garden at Bryn Seiont. After inserting the above incident in his Diary, he adds: 'I owe him much, and cannot forget it. His death thrusts me to the front, and nearer the brink.' The following Tuesday Dr. Thomas was buried, and Dr. Evans preached his funeral sermon in the evening at Tabernacle Chapel, taking for his text 'Moses, the servant of the Lord' (Deut. xxxiv. 5).

So these two parted on earth, feeling upon their souls the dawning freshness of a new Wales, consecrating, by their last farewell, the political ideals of the nation they both so fervently, so stedfastly loved.

As usual, the path descends from the height of the shining cloud to the plain of bitter winds. The next note in his diary (July 31) is

I preached at Pembroke Dock, and a reporter sent to the papers that 'there were many in the ministry, [in Wales], because they were too lazy to do anything else.' I never said it, but it brought me great worry and bother.

What he *did* say was : 'The time is gone, in Wales, when a man in the pulpit can do without power, without every power, but particularly the power from on high. The day for entering the ministry as a sinecure is past.' But if, as he remarks, 'this were sent to a newspaper, it would not be worth paying for ; and the correspondent, being a man of parts, sent it in a form that would secure for it publicity.' We commemorate the episode, because it gave him much pain, and to show that small irritations can rudely invade even a 'great year.'

His Autumnal Address is, during those summer months, looming large in view. Towards the end of August it is 'in a fog,' and he is at Llandudno trying to 'get it out.' However, by September 12 he can write this record :

Last night (Sunday) I preached at Bryn Sïon, and this morning sent off my Autumnal Address to the printers, from Boncath. It has cost me much thought and prayer : may God bless its delivery and its reading ! It contains a message to all churches. Its subject, 'A Living Church,' was the first suggested to me, even before the one in May : and were its suggestions only carried out, it would bring about a revolution.

He was not without some fear that his subject might be anticipated, especially in the Union

Sermon to be preached by the Rev. J. M. Gibbon—both of them sons of the same village chapel—and this letter (October 4) to the Rev. William Pierce puts that fear in humorous light :

Can you let me know what Mr. Gibbon's subject is? He comes before me, and I should like to know. You have heard of the old preacher in the American camp meeting, going round asking everyone 'What are you going to preach upon?' and when answered, 'I really don't know yet,' asked again, 'Is it on "the balm of Gilead?"' and when told no, 'Then take any other subject you like!' That is my case: my 'balm of Gilead' is now printed and can't be changed. I am afraid of the 'balm,' but it must go now.

I shall leave here on Friday or Saturday, so if you have a good book, it will help me to forget the 'balm;' so send it by return. I have read all named by you—except the 'Coming Terror' by Buchanan.

I went to Leeds last Thursday to preach a missionary sermon—and caught cold—and it makes all things look drab, especially the 'balm of Gilead.'

The following day (October 5) has this note under it :

My address came back printed, on Sunday : it is now Wednesday. It seems to get poorer every day, and I do not like this printing a thing before it is delivered. I seem to believe that everybody has read it, although I feel pretty sure no one has, except one's wife.

Next day we feel a breath of larger air, though it is chill through having risen in the wastes of Death :

October 6th.—Renan and Tennyson are dead. How great men drop off, like the leaves, in this season ! One is flippant and clever, but he dies : the other is serious and sad, but he also passes away. They are both great, but criticised by the most ordinary men, some depreciating, others eulogising, them.

Popularity is a poor thing : we all try for it, but it is ever true—‘What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue !’

Under October 9 we have this searching little note of self-criticism :

It is Sunday before my Autumnal Address at Bradford. I was to have been resting at Harrogate, but having caught cold in preaching at Leeds (September 29th), I have stayed at home lest I should aggravate it, and fail to do my work next week. Mr. Jones, Chwilog,¹ is preaching for me, and staying here, and going to Bradford with me to-morrow. He is very faithful and true. It has been to me a quiet Sunday, but full of anxiety. How foolish I am, not to trust the Lord more, since I have done my best in preparing, and shall do so in delivering, my Address ! Is Sir Andrew Clark right, that we preachers do not believe in God practically ? I have always been too anxious before every deliverance. May God teach me how to trust Him more and more !

¹ See Preface to this volume.

Next day but one, the over-anxious anticipation is followed by this note, warm-hearted and grateful :

Delivered my Address at Bradford. I was greatly helped by the Lord. It was a message, and was taken as such. It is, I believe, the best thing I ever published. Bless the Lord, O my soul !

The Rev. T. C. Edwards (Edwardsdale, Penn.), describing afterwards the effect the Address produced, quotes what Thomas Jones had said to him in 1876—'He is the greatest orator Wales ever produced'—and adds : 'Several portions of the Address made me think of Henry Ward Beecher, and I believe none but an orator could have done what he did.'

The Address, by a special vote of the Assembly, was ordered to be circulated among all the churches.¹ But we cannot forbear making two or three quotations woven with a thread of autobiography. Speaking of the 'living preacher' as essential to the 'living church' he remarked :

Erasmus says, 'The first condition of success in persuasion is to love what we recommend.' . . . Ineffective preachers, as a rule, are lacking in one of two things—in real personal religious conviction, or in

¹ It was also included in *True and False Aims* &c., pp. 288-318.

sincere interest in the welfare here and hereafter of their fellow-men.

These words form an unconscious self-portraiture :

A preacher if he keeps his mind, his eyes, and ears ever open, will never fail for suggestions from all sorts of sources. There is no philosopher's stone, that will turn so many things into golden thoughts for him, like constant observation. New thoughts—fresh ideas—come continually to him that is looking for them, and observing carefully things and events around him. Goethe said that his best thoughts came so to him like singing birds, the free children of God, crying, '*Here we are !*'

The next quotation reveals his artistic temperament :

In almost all the Welsh churches there is a deacons' pew immediately surrounding the pulpit. It was started doubtless on the principle that the most responsive hearers should be under the eye of the preacher ; the eloquence was believed to be, not only in the audience, but in that part of it nearest the pulpit. I must admit that it does not always work well. Sometimes there are non-conductors in the deacons' big pew, listening with closed eyes, and giving no response except an occasional yawn—a response which never yet inspired any speaker.

When yawners multiply, I always think that the

English system is the best, to scatter the non-conductors amid the congregation, out of the immediate sight of the preacher. There is something significant in the words of Christ, that the only seed the best sower throws, which brings forth fruit, is that which falls on the ground of 'an honest and good heart.' No man without 'an honest and good heart' ought to be near the pulpit, lest he should hinder the blessed influences from reaching the congregation.

He was again speaking from his own life when he pleaded for the recognition of woman's ministry :

How slow we have been to ask our *sister*-members to help us !—although we read of deaconesses in the early Church, and although we do not read of a single woman who was unkind and unfaithful to the Saviour while here upon earth. Men were diabolic in their cruelty to Him, but never did a woman betray Him, mock Him, desert Him, or spit in His face. Many of them cheered Him on His way to the Cross, washing His feet with tears before men pierced them with nails, anointing His head with precious perfume in anticipation of the thorns with which men crowned Him. They wept with Him on the way to Calvary, and were true to Him to the very end. And are they not devoted and true to Him still ?

Why, then, have we been so long in calling for their services ?

His tribute to Dr. John Thomas honours both of them :

I stood before the St. George's Hall in Liverpool when the first waters of the great Vyrnwy Lake in North Wales rushed in, springing up in the fountains before the hall. I thought of those expressive words of Theodore Parker : ' A particular church is fortunate if it can get an eminent man of religion for its teacher—a man of genius, great character, great conduct, great life. It is like getting a great lake to flow through a thousand pipes into the streets and lanes of a great city, the mountain water bubbling up in the haunts of filth and disease.' I thought of the preacher brought from the same country to a pulpit close by, influencing, cleansing thousands of lives ; making the buoyancy of youth bright and cheerful, and the faith of the old firmer in its grip on Jesus ; making all lives richer to themselves and to others, filling their homes with ' the beauty of holiness ' and turning them heavenwards, so that each earthly home should face the eternal Home of the Father of Jesus. And while the pure crystal streams flow in from the hills, so shall the influences of such lives tell upon all coming time, and make this earth a richer, grander inheritance.

We return to his Diary :

October 16th.—Went with Annie to see the lonely spot near Buxton, where I tried my voice first after my break-down in 1880. There we thanked God together

now, for sustaining me in the Chair. It was a blessed time of prayer on a Sunday morning—a real visit to Bethel.

And he enlarges upon it in a 'Monthly Note :'

Let me here say that no one can comprehend all that a year's service as Chairman of the Union means, but those who have undergone the labour and anxiety. Dr. Parker and others told us that they were tired out, and had lost all enjoyment in work during their Chairmanship. Having reached Buxton at the close of that anxious week, on the Sunday morning I felt again a call as from the Lord to go and seek the spot made sacred to me by former associations.¹ I had quite forgotten on which side of the town to search for it, and I missed my way more than once. I knew I would recognise it, once I saw it. Though failing for a long time to find it, retreat was not to be thought of ; a voice kept calling—'Arise, go up to Bethel.' And thither my wife and I went, saying, 'Let us arise, and go up to Bethel ; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went' (Gen. xxxv. 3). And when we had reached our Bethel, and the old gate opening into the field, which is to us for evermore as sacred an altar as the oak by Shechem, under which Jacob buried 'the strange gods' out of sight for ever,—leaning on the gate, without cry or shout, but simply, and with many tears—in a prayer not to be forgotten by the two present,

¹ See Part III., Chap. I.

we thanked the Giver of all strength and renewal for His great goodness and wondrous grace since I was there vowing my vow twelve years before. The writer's purpose . . . is to cheer those who are down, who fear their usefulness is done. One of the most heart-breaking experiences in life is to feel that our strength is ebbing and leaving us ; and the most joyous experience is to feel its return, and that the Lord answers our prayer—‘ O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more ! ’

The next note in the Diary (November 15) is this exquisitely simple one :

My mother is eighty years old to-day. I wrote to all the grandchildren asking them to remember her birthday : and a telegram has just come to say that she received seventeen parcels by post. Dear old *mam* !

Then come his visits to Cambridge (November 20) and Oxford (December 3), with some frank confessions against himself :

Preached at Cambridge and had over 200 undergraduates listening to me at night. I got on far better than I expected ; and yet I am as anxious as ever at having to face a similar congregation at Mansfield a few days hence. O, how ridiculously foolish I am !—I only change my burdens all through life. I must be anxious always, about some great effort. And I can make preaching at Pendref a great effort, if there is no greater in the near future.

I preached at Mansfield at 11.30, and 8.30 P.M. I got on far better than my fears. All were kind to me, especially Dr. Fairbairn. I think God helped me to do good during my visit. I felt a great relief when it was over.

For the moment we will postpone the account of his call to the Principalship of Bangor College, and so arrive at December 31 of his 'great year':

The year of my Chairmanship is rapidly passing away. I have sent a letter to my successor [Mr. Albert Spicer] to-night. It is now nearly 9 P.M. I am going down to family worship to thank God, with all my heart, for all His goodness. May He sustain me to-morrow!

Verily a 'great year'!—both in the presence of great assemblies, and in arranging a little joyful surprise for his mother's birthday.

CHAPTER III

TERM OF PRINCIPALSHIP

THE years 1877-80 include what will probably come to be considered the unhappiest episode in Welsh Congregationalism. The churches passed through the tribulation of a College question. We have no heart or wish to revive any portion of the controversy, beyond what is strictly necessary. On one side it was alleged that the independency of Independent Churches was being seriously threatened; on the other, that all good order was about to be involved in endless confusion. Many ministers and churches took sides with a vehemence that might have been better employed: Dr. Evans stood aloof, refusing from first to last to become a partisan. This attitude led to his being a good deal misunderstood, and not infrequently abused—and afterwards to his becoming, in no small sense, his denomination's saviour.

Bala College lay at the root of the controversy. When the University College for North Wales was located at Bangor in 1883, some of the shrewder

minds began to see a way out of the difficulty. They thought if the College could be placed in a new home, the parties at variance might be re-united ; and that the rest might be left to ' God's head-physician, Dr. Time,' as Mr. Kilsby Jones put it once in a letter to Dr. Evans. But the difficulty of removal included a financial outlay. And then came seasonable deliverance through the generosity of Mr. Samuel Morley. In 1885 he wrote to Mr. Burford Hooke, asking him as an Englishman who had had but little or nothing to do with the controversy, if he saw any way out of the difficulty. Mr. Hooke was quick, as usual, to turn the incident into an opportunity. The rest may be told in his own words :

On April 21 [1885] Mr. Morley, though far from well, came expressly from London to Rhyl. He met at luncheon some who were most intimately connected with the University College, and gathered needed information as to that aspect of the training. At night Dr. Evans delivered at a public meeting, over which Mr. Morley presided, a wonderful address on ' Broken Altars.' It has since been published at the Stirling Tract Depôt, and has sold by the thousand. On the following morning a round-table conference was held, at the Westminster Hotel, of friends whom Mr. Morley had invited to breakfast. We suffered from the absence of Dr. John Thomas, who had had an important correspondence with Mr. Morley on the matter, and whom we

regarded as our leader. Dr. Evans began the conversation. In so doing he referred to bitter words which had been spoken on both sides, and said he often wondered how the disputants had got on together on the other side of the Stream ! The matter was looked at from all points, and before we separated Mr. Morley practically agreed to remove the difficulty which hindered the Bangor scheme from being adopted, by a gift, I think, of 2,000*l*. The Conference closed with prayer. Dr. Evans was asked to lead, but he broke down ; then, one after the other, we all broke down. The meeting became one of the most solemn and affecting any of us were ever privileged to attend.¹

At the inaugural services held in Bangor, October 1886, when Dr. Fairbairn gave what might almost be called the ordination charge to the new College, Dr. Evans also delivered an address on 'The Minister.' He said he had been asked to speak on 'The Successful Minister,' but he demurred to the term 'successful,' and explained himself in these words :

I leave the word 'successful' out, because no true preacher or minister has ever reckoned himself successful. The ideal of him who is alive to the greatness of the work overtops his highest attainment. Dr. Caird confesses that he never in his life composed a sermon that satisfied him ; and if others are perfectly satisfied with every sermon they write, that is not a proof that they are

¹ *Evangelical Magazine*, February 1897.

more successful than he. And I know that the most popular English preacher has offered his resignation to his diaconate more than once, because he believed honestly, though mistakenly, that someone else might be more successful. 'Successful?' The committee must pardon me,—I find it too much for me to decide who is successful. When travelling through the country I have ere this come to a part where a retiring minister toiled, who was never seen preaching in a *cymanfa* or 'big meeting,' nor called popular ; but his influence was like 'a sweet savour of Christ' through the neighbourhood ; the children who had left the district remembered him as a 'man of God' ; and seeing the respect he had gained in seeking to gain respect for his Lord, I was ready to take off my hat to him, and ask—Is he not, I wonder, a successful minister ? On the other hand, a man may gather a crowd around him to hear him air his doubts from year to year, preaching down this year the doctrines which he preached as eternal truths last year ; shaking the faith of many, and making others question—May it be that what he preaches as truth this year will be given up by him as a useless fort before another year is gone ? One forms a church of faithful followers for Christ, which will remain from age to age to bless the neighbourhood, as a fountain of living waters to water it and quench the thirst of many a generation. The other draws after him a file of admirers of his talent, worshippers of the man ; and when he sinks into the grave, the crowd scatters, everyone goes to his field and his market, leaving behind an empty wilderness.

The words, besides their intrinsic value, show that the flame of his popularity had not singed his conscience.

For some years a dual College was kept on ; but at last all the initial difficulties seemed at an end, and the one College became finally settled at Bangor in 1890. His interest in it, financially and otherwise, was unceasing ; and he consented to give a course of lectures on Preaching to the students. Then the death of Principal Lewis brought up, early in 1892, the question of a new Principal. A committee of six, meeting at Chester, May 25, unanimously decided to recommend Dr. Evans ; this was ratified by the General Committee with equal unanimity. He writes under June 10 :

This again helps to make this year to me a very eventful one. I am in great perplexity. I cannot see my path of duty. May the Lord lead me !

Greatly perplexed he was, but felt he must refuse the offer. It was, however, renewed ; and the next entry, under December 7, tells us he had been to consult Sir Andrew Clark, who decided against his accepting it.

He made me seriously afraid, and I left him heavily-loaded. I thought, if I got rid of the Oxford visit and the Chairmanship, that I could rest and be thankful.

But alas! here comes this new trial. It teaches me out-and-out self-denial: so, all may be for the best.

Then we come to December 14, and this note:

Attended the Bangor College committee with the intention of refusing the Principalship. When I found them so pressing for me to accept it, and so full of fear lest I should refuse it, I saw that it was my duty to accept it, at least for the present. I did not seek it, and I am truly surprised that it was so unanimously offered me. It may be the voice of God, so I need fear no evil consequences. It is, to me, a great compliment: may God make me worthy of it!

It is only a bare statement to say that the whole denomination breathed relief when his decision was made known. Bangor being so near to Carnarvon, it was his purpose to continue his ministry at Salem, intending the Principalship, as he hints, to be temporary only, as far as he was concerned. He confined himself to the subject of which he was master—Homiletics. No young man could possess a preacher's soul, without being moved and inspired by those wise, brotherly, inspiring lectures. He used to read them for the most part, but would frequently put down his book to chat about some great preacher he had heard, or give an illustration that seemed to come at the moment. These incidents were often more sugges-

tive even than what he had written. This diary note for January 26, 1893, speaks for all his work as lecturer, before and after he became Principal.

To-day I delivered my first address as Principal to the students—I did my best and gave to them the best of all I knew about preaching.

The ‘best of all he knew’ on that subject was by no means inconsiderable.

But he soon found that there were other reasons, besides health, why he should not continue the dual function of minister and Principal. Sunday evening, Nov. 8, of this same year, he took his church into his confidence :

I know it is rumoured again, to my pain, that I intend giving up my ministry. You will not be offended with me for saying that I hesitate—up to this moment—as to the path of duty. I am not well, not as well as I look. The great physician who is in his coffin to-day—Sir Andrew Clark—advised me to relinquish pastoral care last December. The connection between us has been so long that it is very hard to dissolve it, or else I would have done so already. I know my health is like a ship threatening to sink, and the load must be lightened before attempting to sail further. I am not giving a preference to Bangor over Carnarvon, but to the lighter over the harder work, for a season : and then both will, possibly, have to be given up. I am called to do one thing, a great thing, for the denomination and for

religion, which I have not named to anyone : yet I would like to live to fulfil it, because I believe no one else, in the present juncture, could do it. Excuse me for not saying more to-night, and be so considerately kind as not to say anything ungenerous, because none of you can know all the circumstances.

He preached his farewell sermon as minister of Salem, February 25, 1894.

It was a great burden. God knows that we think we are doing right, and yet we may be mistaken.

Mistaken he was not—under the circumstances. He made himself the peace-offering of Welsh Congregationalism. One may have at heart some strong convictions as to the complicated process of events which made such a sacrifice necessary. As a matter of pure sentiment, he should have remained to the end the minister of the church which he had made and fashioned, the church that had loved him in sunshine and sorrow, for nearly thirty years. Has he not, in the preceding chapter, pictured for us the final scene—the coffin in the shadow of the pulpit from which he had preached—preached some of the greatest sermons of this century? But, we must tread softly : for even great sentiments must do obeisance to great ideals. He left Salem—as Abraham left his home one morning to go to ‘the place which

God had told him of.' Was Abraham ever after quite the same, even though God returned to him his sacrifice? Would not the sudden vision of his son, in the light of early dawn or at tranquil eve, bring a quivering to his heart? Dr. Evans never complained: he had his share of bright days to the end: but one finds, now and again, a note and a tone as of one who sat much in the altar's shadow—a wistful note, a chastened tone.

Two or three entries, during the succeeding weeks, simple as they are, tell their own tale:

March 2nd.—I went out fishing for an hour with a new rod. The water was muddy and I only caught two good ones. Spring is in the air to-day. I have had too much to do of late; always on the go, and no rest. Every man needs relaxation—the unbending of the bow.

March 19th.—Went from Cwmbrân ordination to Pontselly and found *mam* confined to her bedroom. She had been ill all through the winter. . . . I realised what Pontselly would be without *mam*!—a place like many others, not a home after that. I fished and caught trout, but there was no *hwyl* about anything. The smoke at night was a failure—*mam* and her intelligent, sensible chat was not there. How things get poorer as we go on in life! Let us trust the future will make up for all disappointments here.

March 27th.—Found two nests, both with eggs. One was deserted because I put my hand in it: the

other was torn by the cat. Everything has its enemy—its destroyer.

He was bidden farewell at Salem, April 30 ; and his diary reference to it closes with these words :

Providence has more than repaid me for every sacrifice in coming hither. It gave me at the start dear Jenny for my wife, whose loss nearly bewildered me. God again gave me her friend Annie to fill her place, who has proved a gift of Providence. No man ever found richer treasures in any town, so that I shall never forget it even in heaven. I have had my share of sorrow and sickness here, but not without help, sympathy, and cheer.

As I look back to-night, I say sincerely—

Bless the Lord, O my soul.

The river of His goodness and mercy has followed all the days ;—may we believe firmly that it shall follow us, the three of us left, until we meet again the three gone before us to the Home of the Father of Jesus—Winnie, Owen Herber, and Jenny—without mentioning other very dear relatives.

Again, on May 4, when he was leaving Bryn Seiont—a beautiful house in its own grounds, just outside the town, where he had resided the last five years—he writes :

We have had excellent health here and many mercies. The quietness of the place helped me much during my

chairmanship. It has enabled us to do without a long holiday. We shall never live in such a beautiful place again.

We are going to Bangor, and I want to put it on record here now, that I shall not tie myself to the College, if it becomes a worry. . . .

I trust in God and do the right as I understand it. I do not expect a Paradise anywhere upon earth. We all try for it, and it is always round the next turning. The promised land is always the land we are not in. So it was to Moses—he saw it afar off. . . . So God leads us on, always hoping ; and what a blessing it is that

Hope springs eternal in the human breast ;
Man never is, but always to be, blest.

Let us believe that we are to be blest, above all our expectation, in God's own home.

That summer he had more than one great day. The first was June 13, of which he writes :

I have just returned from *Cymanfa* Corwen, where I preached in the open air for the first time for some years.¹ . . . There is a great joy in preaching, when one has done his very best to prepare. I feel very thankful to my Saviour for the great strength He has given me for months to preach His Gospel with power from on high. Mr. Nicholson of Southampton told me at the close of the morning service—‘ You ought to go to every *cymanfa* in Wales while God gives you strength.’ I

¹ We omit the generous references to the first preacher. .

came home very thankful to God for renewing my strength so wonderfully.

In July he had a pleasant Yorkshire visit, in connection with the 'Heckmondwike Lecture,' preaching on 'The Ark in the House of Dagon,' with great power; and from there he came to Cardiff, to the Welsh Union meetings. His sermon on Thursday morning was one of his life's events. Before entering the pulpit he had received a telegram announcing his mother's serious illness: he preached on 'Faithful Service'—'The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it' (Ex. xxv. 15):

When picturing the son helping his mother uphill on the way to the house of worship, some overwhelming emotions, which cannot be explained, mastered me: I knew I had given mother my arm for the last time on the way up to Bryn Sion, and I almost failed to give the second of the two pictures in the sermon. And no wonder: minds can surely telegraph to each other.

He hastened to Pontselly—to find her better, as it seemed. She had before assured him that she was no more afraid of dying than of going to bed. Two doctors were called: one was hopeful, and ordered him away for a week's rest: the other bade him stay,—and rightly.

August 3rd.—How lonely must everyone be in dying! I was never before for a *fortnight* by the side of anyone's

death-bed. My other loved ones had hastened home in a few days. How small the help I could give the dearest in her latter end ! We are all onlookers, while the 'dissolving' is going on. . . . The pain of dissolution increases, till she and we are ready to part. 'She will not return any more, Lord, to keep a home for us here, so take her to Thyself and to those who wait for her in the home on high !'—was our prayer with her, Friday night.

What memories her smile recall ! My first recollection of my mother in the old home at Pant yr Onen is, our staying down the livelong night listening to the noise of 'Becca' breaking Newcastle Emlyn toll-gates. My father had been forced to leave the house, rather than join the agitators. She has been my support in many a trouble since that unforgotten night. She possessed infinite courage and energy.

August 4th.—Mother dead !

I had never learnt to live without my mother : her approval was the stimulus to make me try and excel, since a child. My question in doing any act, in writing any article, had been—What will mother say to this, I wonder ? Though afar, she was by my side, since boyhood's days as a guardian angel ; yes, and her idea of what was excellent was like an angel's finger directing me 'Higher ! higher !' . . . I felt as the Gohebydd said to me after the like loss : 'My ambition has ceased with my mother's death : it was the thought of her reading my articles in the *Baner* that incited me to write my best.' O mothers of Wales, do not depreciate your influence ! . . .

A whole fortnight I was beside my mother's death-bed every day ; and the last day, when I could give her no more help, and when she could never again speak to me here, I called upon Jesus Christ to be with her, and that she might *know* He was there ; and I shall never forget the eloquence there was in the signal of her hand, and in the *amen*—the last word she had strength to utter. Thus died my mother. I rushed out of the house into the heart of the forest. The room and my loss were nearly crushing me. . . . I found myself beside an old tree felled by the storm. Its roots, by the hundred, were in sight, and they had dislodged a large piece of earth in falling : and it had borne down with it the tops of all the neighbouring trees, bringing to view an ampler portion by far of blue sky than could be seen from any other spot in that many-branched wood. . . . Earth must be disturbed, I said, that we may see heaven more clearly.

Such a noble mother's noble son ! He was never well from that day, until he too was uprooted. ' It is '—said Dr. Parker, with great emotion, at his Thursday noon service, the morrow of Dr. Evans's death—' it is as if a great oak had fallen.'

We will pause a brief while in the great oak's shadow, knowing it must fall.

CHAPTER IV

READER OF BOOKS, AND LOVER OF NATURE

‘HE was a vigilant watchman,’ said the Rev. Griffith Ellis, M.A., at his funeral: ‘he was “full of eyes;” he looked in every direction. He was a great reader, and a very rapid reader. Indeed, no one followed more minutely than he all the intellectual movements of his age. He knew well what new theories, and what old theories in new guise, were brought to public view by various writers; and he was well acquainted with the attacks made, from different quarters, upon evangelical doctrines; but he clung, through it all, strongly and unflinchingly, to the old.’

His love of books was strong during, and even before, his Liverpool period.¹ And we have seen

¹ In a paper on ‘The Advantages and Disadvantages of Living in Towns’ (*British Weekly*, December 1889), he says:

‘Can the writer ever forget the first free library he was allowed to borrow books out of? May “his right hand forget her cunning” if he does! Books he had heard of, and longed for, but never even seen, until he unearthed this library—not a large one—in a back street of the town: what a world of ideas was opened, what

how he gave himself to reading during his college course. His loyalty to early things and early friends extended also to books and reviews. Up to the last number of the *British Quarterly* he kept making references to it, with a succinct estimate of the contents of each number. His other favourite review was the *Contemporary* : and *Good Words*, of all the monthlies, had his warmest welcome, from first to last.

Next to giving him a new book, he looked upon naming a new one as a kindness to be remembered. Nothing came amiss—biography or essays, higher criticism or fiction, sermons or letters. He had a heart to enjoy reading for its own sake ; he had also a quick eye to see what he wanted for his purpose. In his pulpit very few ‘learned’ words ever appeared : he had translated philosophical definition and theological term into the people’s idiom. The reading was in the sermon, as the ore of the river bed is in the current coin.

He had a sense of literary style : but it was the real message of an author that he valued. Whoever

a feast there was in a single good book ! Without a word of exaggeration, in the four years he lived near, he read that library through, and finished off with—what had been left to the last (not as the best of the feast)—a complete set of Dr. Cumming’s works ! I should like the founder of that library to know that it enabled one youth to despise, without an effort, all the theatres, singing saloons, and public-houses of the city.’

had anything to say, fresh from life, he was at once a docile listener. We select, for their biographical interest, some passing remarks from his letters, notes from his diary, reviews from the *Dysgedydd*.

I shall read 'The Scape-Goat': I have read all his, and enjoyed them much. I am reading Latham's 'Pastor Pastorum,' and consider it very fresh.

I have enjoyed 'Ships that pass in the Night.'

Do you know anything good on Preaching?—not in the run? But don't send anything without consulting me first, because I have all I know of.

[Mark Rutherford's 'Revolution in Tanner's Lane.'] A volume to awaken the reader's mind. We would be glad to learn who the author is. . . . His books are not popular; but they are full of strange hints on the history of the *souls* of men—what men think rather than what men do. This volume contains the record of characters which are orthodox neither in politics nor theology; but it is worth reading in order to perceive how large classes look at things these days. (April 1888.)

[Dr. Parker's 'People's Bible,' vol. xi.]¹ This excellent work continues to be as splendid as it was at the start, if not more so. This volume is confined to Job, a field worthy of Dr. Parker's genius: and, in truth,

¹ There are references to the volumes in succession among his reviews. It evidently took its place among his favourite books.

some portions of the volume are as brilliant as anything ever written on this book. There are 'seeds of thought' on every page. The work as a whole is a task for a giant, and there is now every sign that the giant is sufficient for his task. (October 1889.)

[Richard Jefferies's 'The Gamekeeper at Home.'] We have not often spent a happier day than when following the 'gamekeeper' through his many incidents. We were brought up in the midst of mansions which had mighty care for the game. One supercilious squire threatened to shoot us once, unless we retired from the river's side ; and one whom we loved dearly suffered up to his death because of the false witness of a gamekeeper. On this account we would be glad to see every river free, and all feathered game for him that could catch them. Every injustice burns itself into a child's mind, so that it can never be erased. For all that, we enjoyed reading this volume, though our sympathy flowed constantly towards the poacher who was 'doing' the gamekeeper. The author of this volume was no ordinary man ; but his worth was not discovered till he had died in poverty. (January 1891.)

[December 24, 1891.]—The *Cofiant* [Memoir] of Henry Rees came here this morning, and I think it a blessed book for a minister to read. He was a great preacher, because he was such a devout, godly man. The book has done me good ; and because of this, I have presented it to dear Annie.

I spent the whole day in the house resting [Jan. 1, 1894], after a hard Sunday, and preparing for Barmouth to-morrow. I read 'Heather and Snow,' and enjoyed it very much. It has been a pleasant New Year's Day, and we feel thankful to our Heavenly Father.

[Dr. Dale's 'Christian Doctrine.'] We are very thankful to the author for this timely and valuable volume. . . . To us, there is uncommon charm about all Dr. Dale's works, and so with this volume. He does not attempt to explain every difficulty; he often confesses his inability to do so. But we constantly feel he is able, well informed, honest, and a master-teacher. (January 1895.)

[Dr. Driver's 'Deuteronomy.'] We do not profess to have mastered this volume. It is first of a series . . . and the list of eminent men engaged to expound the different books creates in us great expectations. This first must add to the fame of its author. Consulting its pages here and there, we have had evidence enough that here is a new commentary, differing from anything before in our library. Its value cannot be discovered without long acquaintance. We intend to place the entire series in our College library. We are anxious to save every student from attacking any opinion, from ignorance. We do not fear the light—the light of knowledge; and we were surprised the other day that a man of much ability in this city having presented two volumes to the library should say—'I am afraid they will not be allowed

to appear upon your shelves.' He was, in turn, surprised when we told him that works far more advanced than his volumes were already in the library. It is not requisite to hide, or conceal the truth, but search it out constantly ; this is what the present commentary promises to do ; and as such we are thankful for it. (August 1895.)

[Paul Sabatier's 'St. Francis of Assisi.'] I took this volume with me on my holidays, and it is marked throughout. As a biography it is one of the most excellent. The record throughout is full of lessons which make the reader shut the book and muse. Of course, sermon-matter is not to be found in such a volume as this, but matter enough for thought and meditation.

[A. Sabatier's 'The Apostle Paul.'] The same is the author of this excellent volume !¹ I remember well meeting the late Dr. John Hughes near the Morfa, Carnarvon—we used to exchange new books—and his first question was, 'Have you seen Sabatier on "The Apostle Paul"?' 'No,' was my reply. 'Call yonder to get it : it gives an entirely fresh view, and quite natural, of how Paul's creed developed.' That sentence contains the kernel of the book. . . . The volume is worth buying, if it be thoughtfully read ; or else, better buy the *Strand Magazine*. (October 1895.)

¹ It is curious he should have made this mistake, when the two reviews, with the two Christian names, follow one the other in the *Dysgedydd* (October 1895). But the reviews may have been *written* at different times.

We will close these extracts with part of a letter to his book adviser, Rev. Wm. Pierce, written from Pontselly the last year of his life (March 20, 1896) :

My dear Friend,—I am on the start for Bangor, having been here for a week, and I return by this post ‘Miss Grace [of All Souls].’ You have no idea of the kindness you have done me. It was too cold to fish, I was confined to the house and had nothing to read until your parcel came. It was a royal treat. I have devoured them all ! ‘Miss Grace’ is capital, and has given me much to think of. I thank you most sincerely for your kindness. I leave the other books here, in the Pontselly Library, ready for Justin when he comes down in the summer.

This is the place to enjoy a book ; I have not seen a newspaper for four days ! The world may be full of disasters unknown to me.

No recent novelist touched him more profoundly than Mr. J. M. Barrie. Of ‘A Window in Thrums’ and ‘Auld Licht Idylls’ he wrote (December 1889) : ‘We have not had more enjoyment in reading two volumes for many a day than in perusing these two. . . The author’s genius makes every picture live. Of the two we prefer the first. . . We look eagerly for the author’s next volume.’ There are at least four references to Mr. Barrie in the posthumous number of the

Dysgedydd (January 1897). In one of his 'Notes' he says, quoting Hector Malot :

Write about what you know. Make it a point to know something about which all the world does not know, and then write on that. . . . Mr. J. M. Barrie knew more than anyone else about Thrums, he wrote about the life of the weavers in Thrums, and it has paid him well : and the materials seem inexhaustible.

And this review of 'Margaret Ogilvy' must have been one of the last he ever penned :

This is the best book we have read for years, if not indeed the best we ever read. The son is great : the mother is greater. It is enough to immortalise any author.

If books helped to keep his mind fresh—as prayer kept his spirit fresh—so his intimacy with nature kept his heart fresh. He was, all through his life, favoured in this. His first eleven years on the outskirts of 'Dinas Emlinn,' in a vale through which the turf-coloured Tivy flows with sinuous delay, now lightening through meadows fragrant with clover, now darkening in the tremulous shadow of trees and the immovable shadow of hills :—those years alone would have been no mean dowry. Then came the new home in the more secluded Vale of Cuch, after visiting which

one summer day the Rev. J. Ogmore Davies wrote (June 21, 1891) :

To my great chagrin I learned at Pontselly, on the very day you left, that you had been there. And what is more singular still, one day or two I had walked down to Cwm Cuch, far in the direction of Pontselly at the very time of day you had been up the river in the direction of Cwm Cuch. We must have been very near each other : Longfellow's 'Evangeline' again ! Such is the pathos of a man's lot in life—so near and yet so far ; almost, and not. . . . It would have been delightful to have met you on so lovely a day in so lovely a valley ! I do not wonder at all that you are a great preacher. I believe anybody could be a great preacher—if he could preach at all—who had been born amidst such beauties. Why, I could have been a great preacher myself with my earliest years so dowered ! Anyhow, preach away, dear Herber, there is nothing like it after all. The sweet solemnities of these valleys have been very reassuring and healing to me. I have actually begun my work here at Dyffryn in the depth of Carmarthenshire, by writing two sermons in the last three days—which is more than I have done for the last twelve months.

When those 'sweet solemnities' of early life were finally changed for the vaster, sublimer solemnities of Snowdon and the Menai, he was in the same house of Nature—he had only passed from one window to another. He lived his life between

everlasting mountain strength and everlasting sea-change ; and he partook of both.

He loved spring, he loved sunshine. We have seen him more than once, in this record, renewing the child's delight in the first bird's nest, the first swallow, the first sound of the cuckoo : we shall meet him again, within a few days of his death, watching for the sign of the first snowdrop. This spring meditation might well have been written by Henry Vaughan :

‘ FLOWERS APPEAR ON THE EARTH.’

The snowdrop and primrose and many-coloured crocus have been smiling upon us about the house for days. And every flower is a child of heaven and earth, and whispers to us that earth is fair but heaven fairer. They fill the earth with the fragrance of the resurrection of the Earth-mother. The Creator is visiting the earth, and the summer descends at leisure from God, and is to be seen first in the snowdrop that has worked its way through the red soil, with its garment white as snow, proclaiming ‘ Summer is coming.’ And as the summer descends and extends till it fills all the land, so the ‘ new Jerusalem ’ gradually descends from the same God, appearing at first in the ‘ Lily of the Valleys,’ and then extending through the land and through the lands : before long God's summer will have filled the world with the ‘ sweet savour of Christ ’ and the fruit of the Spirit : ‘ joy, love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness,

faith, meekness, temperance.' What a blessed summer !
(March 1893.)

And this autumn meditation is in a similar strain :

‘HIS LEAF ALSO SHALL NOT WITHER’

My sympathy with Nature in its varying seasons grows stronger as I grow older. I write this time at the window where the faded leaves have been flying past in the breeze for weeks. . . . The tree in front of the study window has lost its leaves, some of them weeks ago, many of them last week ; but the last leaf still lingers, as the village veteran survives all his comrades. I prefer spring and its lessons to the autumn and its mournful warnings. But the poets have, since Homer's day, sung the lessons of autumn. The leaves have all performed their task before falling, and their service is as various as their form and colour. They have beautified the wide world, they have pleased the eyes of thousands, they have sheltered myriads of cattle, they have hidden the nests of innumerable birds, they have purified the atmosphere ; each of them has added to the strength of the tree that gave them existence. . . . Take hold of the withered yellow leaf, and converse with it : ‘Thou hast done thy duty in thy short day . . . let me question myself if I have been in my sphere a blessing ? Have I sheltered any in my day ? Have I purified a country's atmosphere with my speech and the influence of my life ? Will some good institution be stronger because I have been connected with it ? . . . My life, too, approaches the “sere

and yellow leaf " ; but if I have been, as thou, a blessing, there will be beauty in my decay as in thine.' The word of my God speaks of ' good old age ; ' of the ' hoary head a crown of glory ' : but it promises to the believer what is better still—' His leaf also shall not wither ' : eternal life—after fading here, life unfading through union with the God of eternity. Thou yellow leaf, I thank thee for thy lessons and thy ministry ; but this is something too wonderful for thee : life after death ! evergreen after fading !—the Tree that has given us birth addressing us, ' Because I live, ye shall live also.'

CHAPTER V

‘A COVERT FROM STORM AND FROM RAIN’

THOSE who knew him intimately will scarcely hesitate to place his good-heartedness on an equality with his eloquence. It was unfortunate for him that many who knew him but slightly would be impressed—perhaps disagreeably impressed at times—with his unconcealed anxiety on the eve of any public effort. This anxiety might have been due partly to constitutional diffidence, partly to his too early fame, aggravated, undoubtedly, by the nervous tension that brought on his darkened noon. His friends chaffed him; those who were less friendly disparaged him: these pages show what candid discussions he had with his own soul over it. But it remained part of him to the end. Once his friend and co-editor the Rev. Robert Thomas with affable humour rallied him upon it—‘You are too anxious: you want to strike twelve every time: no good clock does that!—be content like me to strike one and two and three occasionally.’

His lack of self-trust made him over-sensitive to anything like depreciation. If anyone, from pure mischief, were to tell him after one of his most unequivocal successes, that he had done anything but well, he would, half believing, half fearing, accept that, at least for the moment, as the verdict of the many. Who can quite discern the self-torment of such a rich, complex nature? When he felt offended, the feeling involved him, we venture to say, in far keener suffering often than the offender. He was the merest novice in the art of being angry and cherishing ill-will. We doubt very much, although he could not forget an unkindness—nor the most trifling kindness—if he ever allowed a remembered injury to hinder his doing his best for anyone in need. One could even put it more boldly and say that where he was hurt he was most sure to help. All this simply means that, though he was only incidentally a poet, he had the artistic temperament to the full.

He had it in him to be generous—to let his very soul be absorbed for the time being in a brother's need. He relieved scores of ministers either in the case of chronic insufficiency, or in some particular distress. To relate all the cases he contrived to help would be unbecoming ; but some of them are eligible inasmuch as the hush of the grave is over those concerned. We have hinted

already that he was well-to-do—and that but comparatively—in his latter years only : but what he did beyond his own resources was to become Christ's treasurer for many—receiving from the benevolent, and passing on to the needy.

One bitter morning, on the platform of a railway station in his own county, he met a village pastor too thinly clad for such inclement air. One keen glance of those shrewd eyes was sufficient ; he went home that morning without his best overcoat ! The recipient's letter is before me as I write : so homely is it in its grateful humour, that part of it shall be translated here :

. . I hastened home as quickly as I could, wearing the coat, to show myself and it to 'my lady,' who was quite as eagerly interested in it as I, and, I am certain, as thankful ! She has compelled me to put it on a dozen times, since last night, to pass a fair unbiassed judgment upon it ; and her confirmed verdict is—'It is a splendid coat : you never had its equal.'

We are both of opinion that the coat must go to the tailor for treatment, before it will look well upon its 'new foundation'—water gruel now, instead of roast beef !¹ I preach the second Sunday of next month at the —— Chapel, and I shall have it altered to correspond to the

¹ A reminiscence from the lecture on 'Oliver Cromwell' : see opening of Chap. ix. (Part III.)

‘new foundation’ by that time. And it would be a desirable thing were some of the spirit and eloquence of its former owner to come upon it and its ‘foundation’!

Well, Mr. Evans, I must say I not only feel the warmest gratitude towards you, but wonder at your kindness. To give your noble lecture gratis and for nothing was, to begin with, a great kindness ; but to strip yourself of your top-coat—your best, I verily believe—before going home, and give it to shelter and keep warm your poorer brother, was a thing not done by any minister in Wales ! Whatever may be the merit of the object, I am well convinced of the merit of the deed. I believe, if it were known to the thousands, it would be as praiseworthy in their sight as your gifts of eloquence are. And I hope the fact of your divesting yourself of your coat and giving it away at Groeslon Station will make your memory fragrant when you are gone. Those friends to whom I have shown it say without hypocrisy—‘May God’s blessing ever follow him !’

During his preaching tour through Carnarvonshire and Anglesey in 1862, on behalf of the building fund of Brecon College, he visited a small church in the latter county, preaching on a Saturday night in a barn—as the chapel was under repair. We need scarcely repeat that he was as earnest in collecting money for a good cause as in preaching. But one of the deacons of that church was obstinate

in refusing, and the eloquent young visitor as persistent in pleading. At last, however, the deacon made use of some sharp words which wounded him to the quick. He could not avoid returning to them, time after time that evening, and all next day: and more than once he said to his host that he wished he might stand beside the old deacon's deathbed—'I would not like him to go home in that hard spirit.' At the time, nothing could seem more unlikely than that a minister from the extreme limit of South Wales should happen to be there on death's incalculable date. Six years later, he was again in the neighbourhood, preaching at the 'Big Meeting' of the same church, when a request came from the old deacon, actually dying, that 'Mr. Evans should come to him.' He went, read and prayed, and partook of the Lord's Supper in the dying man's room.

When he returned to the chapel for the afternoon service, he seemed in solemn, abstracted mood. It fell to him to read and pray. And that prayer is beyond all description. Those who knew Dr. Evans can more easily imagine the intensity and the effect of his prayers on such occasions—especially as he prayed for the old man that he might have a 'fair and calm afternoon for crossing the River.' Before another daybreak he had crossed—where many thoughts and harsh words have to be forgiven.

Two names, adorning the Welsh pulpit, and cherished with deep affection because of the eloquence and early death associated with them—are those of William Nicholson and J. Alun Roberts. Mr. Nicholson had many points in common with Dr. Evans, and the intense earnestness of the one harmonised well with the enraptured eloquence of the other to complete and unify the effect of a special service. But in 1882 there were grave premonitions; and, by medical advice, Mr. Nicholson undertook a voyage to Australia in the autumn of that year. When he was presented, for the purpose, with some 240*l.* at Grove Street Chapel, Liverpool (October 24), exactly half of that sum had been obtained by Dr. Evans—‘than whom,’ said Mr. Nicholson, ‘there is no one living more loved by our denomination in Wales, and in England too for that matter.’ The voyage proved beneficial, but only for a season: and during the months that remained of Mr. Nicholson’s life, to the summer of 1885, he proved a true comforter. One finds frequently in Mr. Nicholson’s letters some sentence like this (December 6, 1884): ‘It was most refreshing to receive your letter this morning: a Carnarvonshire breeze came over my soul, from it, so cooling and bracing.’ Or again (May 24, 1885): ‘You are my friend, and I cling to you.’

The Rev. Alun Roberts was for a few years

minister at Pendref, Carnarvon—fellow-workers and fellow-sufferers: for he was there during the darkened years. This 'Note' (February 1890) appeared at Alun's death:

He advised us often during those months to give up our ministry altogether, and advised others to bring influence to bear upon us. He himself was not strong at the time, and many a conversation we had on the obscure and inexplicable Providence of the great God: and our ultimate decision may be helpful to others. It was this—that everyone, in a world like this, must have faith in God, believing, whatever may be dark or perplexing, that 'In Him is no darkness at all.'

Not once, not twice, Alun and I walked out in spring; and when we heard the bird sing in the cold, sing in the snow, sing because it was certain of spring and summer at hand, we said, And why cannot we too sing? an ever-green spring is before us, an everlasting summer in promise, to us also, 'O, we, of little faith!'

It had been seen towards the close of the summer of 1888 that nothing but a voyage could afford him relief. Dr. Evans, once again, made himself responsible for the whole expense. 'Without you it could not have been done'—wrote Mr. Roberts, simply (October 6). From Melbourne (January 3, 1889) he wrote the following letter, which reveals and ennobles both him that wrote and him that received it:

I have seen Dr. Bevan and have attended his church several times. He was very genial and kind, and promised to do anything he could for me. Your very kind and flattering letter no doubt would be the means of making him interested in my case. Your name is well known here ; I have met some who got into raptures when they found out that I was so well acquainted with you. I was at one of Dr. Bevan’s deacons’ one day to tea : he is from Bristol, and so genial. He knows you, and is a great admirer of your preaching. I gave him as good a description as I could of your preaching at one of the *cymanfas*. You know I was never credited with much descriptive power, but I succeeded to make my auditor open his mouth wide, and the tears filled his eyes. However, I must frankly confess my own heart was full, and very little would have sent a shower of hot tears down my face. Somehow I find myself growing very sensitive to things that did not touch me much years ago. Would you believe it ?—yet it is a fact : I could not open a *Welsh Bible* for days after my arrival, the very sight of it flooded my mind with thoughts that almost crushed me.

We will now give the conclusion of the ‘Note’ from which we have already quoted above :

When the three words were telegraphed to us the last Friday of the old year—‘Alun has died’—no one can comprehend what hosts of reminiscences and thoughts swept through our mind before we could think of rest that night. Alun dead ? we questioned. No, he lives—in two senses. He lives in the memory and affection of

thousands of admirers, English and Welsh, in America, Australia, and his own country : and he lives in the possession of eternal life in glory. And what is 'glory'? O that he to-day might tell us ! We must reach there before knowing ; but we know ' the best is in store.' *Rest* is good to a great sufferer like him, but glory is more than that. *Safety* is good to one who had faced many storms on seas and land, and in intellectual spheres ; *happiness* is good after having failed to get it because of illness, pain, and anxiety : but glory is more than all. It contains victory, honour, immortality, triumph ! The word is exquisite ; but the reality to Alun is better—'GLORY !'

Indeed, it would seem as if the wounded in life's struggle sought him by a kind of sacred instinct. The Rev. J. Ogmore Davies (Blackburn),¹ already introduced in our last chapter, lived the last years of his shortened life by death's daily permission. It will be well, after reading this, to return to the letter already quoted from, as that comes, chronologically, after this ; and in it the poignant note of this is softened into calmness :

The Solent, Hambro Road, Ventnor : November 11, 1890.

My dear Herber,—You see where I am. I am here, by order of two London doctors who examined me three weeks ago. The doctors will not now say that I shall

¹ Author of *Sunrise on the Soul*—a volume of sermonic studies on St. Matthew's Gospel. Mr. Davies died in 1892.

finally recover. They say they must wait and see what rest and pure air will do for me ; and so, my dear Herber, I am here without much hope on the one hand and engaged in resisting the inroads of despair on the other, and that often with doubtful effect. And now, my dear Herber, I am so glad I have at last met you. I could never have known you except in the gloaming and never have felt you except in the sweet sadness of a quiet autumnal sunset. I could never have seen you, Herber, except through tears. But I now have seen and known you through and through, and I love you. So you see, in the losses of this strange year, by which I have been made a stranger on the face of the earth, I have found you—found a new human heart to dwell in, and I am thankful.

Such incidents of unfailing brotherliness will substantiate the appreciation of him contained in this kindly letter of Principal Fairbairn :

Mansfield College, Oxford : January 2, 1897.

Dear Mrs. Herber Evans,—I have heard with the keenest distress and sympathy of your sudden and sad bereavement. And in your sorrow we all share. Your late husband was one of the brotherliest of men, large in nature and in heart, full of generous impulses and strong convictions, a man who loved his people and his Church, and who knew no higher joy than to preach the Gospel he loved as ‘the power of God unto salvation.’

There was no man Wales could less spare ; no man whose death would be a heavier loss to our churches, not

only in the Principality, but throughout England. We looked to him as one who could speak the thing he believed with the strength of independence and honest conviction. He was genial and tender, the very soul of radiant happiness and humour. I have the most vivid recollection of some of his quaint, swift, kindly sayings. I used to feel that he was a comfort to look at and to think of ; his very presence made one understand how a man could be 'a hiding-place from the tempest and a covert from the storm.' And now when I think of the multitudes in Wales who crave a strong man as a tower to which they can flee, and know that he is no longer among them, my heart grows heavy and sore.

CHAPTER VI

THE SPIRIT'S ENRICHING

WHILE he diligently cultivated heart and mind, he did not forget the culture of the spirit. His diary notes, written for his own satisfaction in the first instance, show how he felt God's hand about him continually. He loved prayer—loved it as much in his little family circle as in the great congregation: nor could his public prayers have been so memorable without a more private converse with God. Mr. Josiah Thomas relates this incident of his last visit to his house (May 1896):

After dinner on Sunday I said to him: 'Doctor, we always read a chapter before rising from table, and we will do so to-day.' 'By all means,' he replied, 'and I will pray.' After reading our verses, each his own, we knelt, and Herber prayed; and such a prayer!—not compassing land and sea, but on behalf of the parents, and of each of the children, and especially for the son who was in the midst of his anxiety graduating at the University, and for the maid—till we all felt we had been

at the gate of the City; so that it was no wonder the maid should say afterwards to her mistress: 'I never heard such a prayer as that.'

He believed in prayer, with his whole soul. In his devotional address, as retiring Chairman of the Union, at the prayer meeting in May 1893, he said :

I have unbounded faith in prayer. I can always gauge in my own chapel and congregation how high a meeting will rise if there are only men and women present; but once God comes there, I know not what may be done.

I do not profess to understand how God answers prayer: it is not my business: that belongs to Him who has promised. Jesus knew and understood all things, and prayed continually—prayed three times in one place, showing us the third prayer may obtain what the first has failed to gain.

What he received in heavenly converse became clear in his human relationships. He lived through trying periods. As a Nonconformist, and a defender of Nonconformity against angry attacks, he was severely tested. The chronic ill-will fostered through the overdue settlement of the Disestablishment question, the specific irritation caused by the Suspensory Bill and other half-measures, the periodic re-appearance of the Welsh episcopal fable about Non-

conformist ministers of position seeking admission into the Established Church—all this would test the temper and spirit of an accredited leader. How well he bore himself we have partly seen. He fought hard, but ever with good humour. When in one of his speeches he referred to the cry of 'Church robbery!' and said, 'No, we don't want to rob the Church, but only to take it off the parish,' the remarks of the *Daily News* were generally re-echoed: 'A little of this Welsh humour is the best response to the solemn and pessimistic arguments so often heard on the other side. . . . We want more men like Dr. Herber Evans in rural communities to use the weapon of humour against the Establishment. The walls of Jericho may come tumbling down to the music of laughter as well as to the sound of the trumpet.'

Whatever anger he might feel occasionally against the Establishment, he was not slack to give credit both to the Church and to Churchmen, where it was due. Indeed, we may say that the only permanent feeling he entertained in this respect was hatred of snobbery—social or ecclesiastical. Many will remember a telling passage in his Bradford speech of 1876,¹ where he made

¹ At the 'Principles' meeting. His subject was: 'Congregationalism and what makes it a Power.'

playful use of the phrase—‘the English of it,’ as equivalent to ‘the truth of it,’ and proceeded :

Let us then convince our people once for all that our principles are ‘the English of it’—the truth of it—and we shall not see many surely deserting our Church for the sake of social position. All of us might have improved ourselves in that direction, I think, a little. Martin Luther might have been a cardinal in the Romish Church if he could only have forgotten ‘the English of it.’ And I think there are brethren around me who might have been very reverend deans and most reverend bishops in another Church, if they could only forget ‘the English of it.’ There is nothing that kindles my indignation more than to see a man who has gone up in social position by betraying his conscientious opinion look down upon another that would not go up simply because he could not forget ‘the English of it.’

Without forgetting ‘the English of it,’ he had more than one social distinction conferred upon him ; and when he received the rare honour for a Non-conformist minister of being appointed to the magistracy (February 1895), it is in this simple-hearted fashion he writes of it his Diary :

February 25.—Exactly twelve months from our farewell to Salem, Carnarvon ! Is it a sign that we did right in leaving ? a new and an unexpected honour, coming—on February 25. Anyhow, I thank God for it—and for it on that date.

I have not been at all well for weeks, and have had to recall many engagements. I think I am getting better, and possibly our Heavenly Father is cheering us by this new honour. Anyhow, I wish my old father and mother had lived to see me so honoured in a county where I have lived so long. God has been good to me : may He enable me to say with confidence, 'Thy goodness and mercy *shall* follow me all the days of my life' !

Wales being so well supplied, in town and country, with chapels by the various denominations, sometimes the interdenominational relations are a good deal strained. But much can be done by wise leaders to ease the tension ; and it has been done with pious fidelity these many years. Dr. Evans was from first to last a sturdy Independent : but he never hesitated to denounce sectarianism, in his own or any other denomination. This, however, did not hinder, rather did it help, his being esteemed and indeed loved by large numbers in all denominations. Nothing gave him purer pleasure than to preach in 1895 for the Calvinistic Methodists, in Liverpool in January, and at Llangetho in the summer. He was in great pain that Sunday in January : the doctor afterwards told him he would have stopped him, had he been consulted beforehand. ' But,' he writes in his diary, ' I am glad even now that I went, because it was

to serve another denomination.' He was confined to his bed for a week afterwards, and remarks.

How sad many a year opens, and how dark the future outlook seems ! We know nothing, and we can only venture on in the hand of the great Leader. He knows, and we can step on to the unknown future under His guidance.

But his visit to Llangeitho was still more romantic. He was coming to a birthplace of the Evangelical Revival, associated for ever with the name of Daniel Rowlands. Of all heroisms that moved him, the heroic preacher first ! This is part of his 'Monthly Note' (for August):

What was, what is Llangeitho, apart from preaching ? An ordinary village, hard to descend into, and far harder for one like me to ascend out of ; indeed, some-one called it 'the cauldron's bottom,' to suggest that one must climb, in every direction, to get out of it. And yet it is many a year since I was in a more interesting place. Preaching there was as natural, as easy as breathing. Memories of Rowlands ('Europe's greatest preacher in his day,' according to Jones, Llangan) were in the air. I know I am an extreme admirer of a true preacher, and of everything connected with his history, and that Daniel Rowlands has been a hero to me from my boyhood. Is it any wonder then that I walked along the banks of the Aeron, where he used to meditate before ascending into the pulpit—that I mused around his

striking statue with the hand outstretched, a picture of the genuine orator—and around all the spots sacred to me through the memory of one of the old giants of our nation's pulpit? There was inspiration for me in everything there—in the door that opened into the pulpit, at the back, from the open air. Through a similar door Rowlands used to come, fresh from meditation, without a word from anyone to disturb his spirit, after he had been with God, before facing the crowd. And then, at the sermon's close, after lifting them up to heaven, he would as suddenly leave them, often without promising to conclude, and indeed not concluding until all but the message had cooled—then *Amen!*—and out as an angel of God suddenly from sight.

He adds a characteristic touch of humour later by way of appendix ; and it bears on our present theme. Commenting on the fact that there was no Independent Chapel in sight in those parts, he recalls a similar experience in bygone years, while acting once as provisional deputation for the Bible Society. On his return that time, he said from Salem's pulpit that they would be surprised to hear he had been speaking every night for a week without seeing an Independent Chapel, or lodging in an Independent's house.

When I descended from the pulpit my faithful and honest old deacon, David Harries, came to me, surprise written on his face, and asked 'Where have you been ?

in hell?' 'Dear Mr. Harries,' I replied, 'and do you believe there is no Independent in hell? I fear there may be many a one; but there is no Christian there. To be Christians is far more important for you and me than to be Independents.'

In his earlier years he was occasionally trenchant in his remarks on what he considered unorthodox opinions. His speech at the 'Leicestershire Conference' debate (May 1878) is not without a trace of this in its talk about 'German barm,' and such gratuitous humour. But, while he remained loyal, unflinchingly loyal, himself, to evangelical doctrines, he became much more tolerant of other views, as his addresses from the Chair show, and reviews of books already quoted.

When Dr. Dale died, early in 1895, he has a very appreciative memorial note in reference to him,¹ containing this impressive reminiscence:

Some two years ago I was invited to spend an afternoon with him at Treborth² (a home that accords ready welcome to wearied ministers of all denominations), and, conversing about his theory that the ungodly are to be annihilated, I said that if I believed that, I could not feel intensely for men's salvation. This moved him profoundly; tears came into his eyes, as he said, 'I have never been so intensely anxious to save my fellow-

¹ Among his 'Monthly Notes' for April of that year.

² Home of the late Mr. Richard Davies, M.P.

men, especially those who listen to me at Carr's Lane, as I am these years. The punishment of those who reject Christ is terrible, and I do not know what its duration may be ; and is not annihilation after suffering terrible to you also ? No, no, it is an inexpressibly great thing to be saved. That is my strongest reason against your giving up your pastorate at Carnarvon and preaching here and there. I can never feel as intensely about saving men among strange congregations as among my own people.' I give the incident exactly as it occurred, because it showed to me tenderness unto tears in the intense desire of the great preacher to bring men into union with Christ in order to receive eternal life.

But he had partly prepared himself, even from the first, for this growing charity of faith. Nothing could be more straightforwardly generous than his review of the Life of Dr. Rowland Williams, in 1877 ; concluding with these words :

As a Nonconformist, we cannot agree or sympathise with Dr. Williams's ecclesiastical opinions, nor agree with him upon many other points. But, taking him all in all, we cannot do less than admire his courage, his determination, his deeply religious spirit, as well as his high learning, and splendid abilities.

In another direction, also, the enriching of his spirit may be discerned. Let anyone compare his earlier monodies on death with his later ; and he cannot but be struck with the change of note—

as from the key of Tennyson's *In Memoriam* to the ampler, more tranquil key of a Pauline epistle. The outburst of 1875—'in the bitterness of my grief, to wish to have her return'—makes way for calmer monologues of faith, and for such sunny hopes as this :

There is more in Christ than we have thought. We have not seen all the angels yet. We have never seen the Angel of Death ; perhaps that will be the kindest of all the angels ! We have not seen the Angel of Resurrection yet, who will show us what it will be to live in a body without any pain. We have not seen the Angel of Ascension yet, who will lead us to the general assembly and Church of the first-born. Destroy this Jesus, indeed !—it is impossible. Who can open such a future before us as He ? Rather let us shout with one voice—*Make Jesus King !*¹

His theology became more and more Christocentric—especially after his illness. The keynote of his later ministry was given in the subject of his address from the Chair of the Welsh Union—'Christ's Answer to the Questions of the Age.' Amidst all doctrinal changes, and all disturbing criticisms of the Bible and the Church, he took refuge in Jesus Christ. Preaching at the Jubilee of Albion Church, Southampton, September 1894,

¹ From one of his last sermons, on 'Destroying Jesus' (Mark i. 6, xi. 18, and John xii. 10).

soon after his mother's death—on one of his loved texts, 'Looking unto Jesus,' he said : ' I never entered a pulpit with a stronger faith in Jesus than I do this morning : for I believe Jesus was the glory of the past, that Jesus is the life of the present, that Jesus is to be the hope of the future—and that Jesus has no rival.'

He had a sermon in Welsh during his early years, based on Zech. xiv. 6, 7 : ' Not day, nor night ; but . . . at evening-time it shall be light.' Its theme was progressive revelation—progressive, and yet ever bounded as it were by a receding twilight, until the light at eventide should usher in the perfect morning. We give some passages from one eloquent paragraph, which he used to deliver with overpowering effect, describing how no age, dark though it may have been, was without some ray of light :

Let it be written on the dwellings of the antediluvians, where sin and corruption prevailed—' Not day, not day ; ' and I will write on the tent of righteous Enoch—' Not night, not night.' Write on the waves of the waters of the Deluge the epitaph of a world of sinners—' Not day, not day ; ' and I will write on the door of the Ark, shut by the Lord Himself, ' Not night, not night.' Write on the throne and the palace of Ahab—' Not day, not day ; ' and I will write on Elijah's mantle, ' Not night, not night.' . . . Write on the synagogues of lifeless, dead

Pharisaic Judaism—‘Not day, not day ;’ and I will write over the dwellings of Anna and Simeon, Elizabeth and Mary, ‘Not night, not night.’ . . .

And as then, so to the end, he remained a preacher of hope, singing in the day of Jesus upon earth. When he returned to the May missionary platform in 1894, for the Baptist Society, it was to proclaim, as fervently as he had done twenty-one years before for the London Missionary Society, his valorous belief in the ultimate triumph of the Gospel and the supremacy of Christ. ‘Don’t sneer,’ he said :

You don’t know Christ as they do, else you never would. These missionaries, men and women, know Jesus as the first Christians did. Those who lived and went about with Him, how sorrowful they were to think of His leaving them ! They considered themselves orphans after Jesus left them, and they so longed for His re-appearing that they expected Him in their own day. Nothing could make a brighter life on earth for them who knew what His companionship meant than His coming back again. He is now to thousands what He was to those who knew Him best—God’s Sun of Righteousness, whose business it is to drive out the darkness. The sun never argues ; its argument is that darkness disappears and hurries away once it appears and shines. Christ has arisen upon us, and He has driven away the darkness from the hearts of thousands of men ; they sing in what

Gustave Doré pictured in his last work as the 'Vale of Tears'; they sing because Jesus is leading them out of the great tribulation. Yes, Jesus drives away the darkness from the deathbed and the churchyard, and brings light through His empty open grave to show that the grave is not the end of the journey, but the last tunnel before reaching the great terminus of the city of God. O Thou glorious Sun of Righteousness, climb higher, ever higher; throw Thy beams farther, dispel the painful darkness, so that all people may rejoice, as we have, in Thy cheering, glorious light, and may catch a glimpse of another life; so that life here may become worth living to all suffering men and women, and so that salvation may be known to the uttermost parts of the earth.

The preacher of hope became a singer of hope. In 1886 he published—modestly anonymous—a hymn which seems likely to take its place permanently among the songs of the sanctuary in Wales, and which we have elsewhere translated: ¹

Keep me very near to Jesus,
 Tho' beneath His cross it be;
 In this world of evil-doing,
 'Tis the cross that cleanseth me:
 Should affliction come, and darkness,
 Let this hope with me abide—
 After all the gloom and sorrow
 Light shall be at eventide.

¹ *Sweet Singers of Wales.*

Bring to mind my past experience—
That will take my fears away :
For Thy goodness and Thy mercy
Shall be mine till close of day :
In the tears, the clouds, the tempest,
Shine on me, O Crucified !
There's a promise in God's rainbow—
Light shall be at eventide.

Lead me onward to the future,
Where I fear one step to move :
Still the love of God will keep me,
Love beyond a mother's love !
Does not Calvary bear witness ?
And they know on yonder side—
Tho' the cross stand in the pathway,
Light shall be at eventide.

‘ Many symptoms show signs of breaking up,’
he wrote in his Diary, January 13, 1895 ; and
proceeded :—

To-day I have been reading Bunyan's ‘ Pilgrim's
Progress.’ His description of Christian in the Land of
Beulah is very tender and beautiful. And his remark
that Christian entered the River of Death in his body,
and came out on the other side without it, struck me
much. . . . It is few that I have seen enjoying the
rapture of Beulah, but I have read of a few—such as
Payson. God grant us a taste of it !

CHAPTER VII

THE GREATEST YEAR

‘ Not night, not night ’

THE first note in the Diary for 1896 shows how he began the New Year :

January 2nd.—This is the first time for me to write 1896. I returned this morning from Holyhead, where I preached twice yesterday, and I am very exhausted to-day. I preach very hard—over one hour last night. . . I wish I could learn wisdom and take it more quietly. I forget my age in the pulpit.

Next comes this note (January 6) :

To-night I read a book—‘ Pulpit Memorials ’—containing brief lives of twenty popular ministers. I co-lived with all of them, but they have almost all passed away. How short a preacher’s remembrance is ! popularity, how short ! how vain ! what a burden ! How they leave one for one blunder (*e.g.* Winter Hamilton) ! Is it worth living for ? No, eternally no ! It is poor and contemptible.

With the exception of 1892—‘the great year’—1896 has more to its account in his ‘Perennial Diary’ than any other year :

January 9th.—I was to be in London to-morrow, attending a deputation to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but last night I found I had taken a bad cold at College, and that there was a boil ! How suddenly they come, and how slowly they depart ! The dread of them hangs over one like Damocles’ sword . . It takes the heart out of one.

Jan. 15th.—The boil again ! . . How difficult it is to be thankful ! The pain is a burden, which one feels ought to be taken away, in order to enable one to do his good work better : but alas ! it must be done, if at all, with the thorn in the flesh stinging all the time.

17th.—Found the first snowdrops and crocuses in the garden. Spring is evidently coming, although we may have snow and frost and hard weather first. But the sign cannot be turned back—spring is coming !

29th.—It has been very mild weather. We cannot believe the winter is yet gone, owing to the wild winter of last year : but possibly we are to go by contrast. I have no engagement for the next two Sundays owing to the coldness of last year—I refused all distant engagements.

March 17th.—Heard to-day of the death of Dr. Gethin Davies [Principal of Bangor Baptist College] from cancer. How well he looked when I met him last : how he spoke to me—unwell at the time—of the virtue of walking

much, and bathing in the Menai : how I envied him his robust health ! And here he is gone, at once. . How very uncertain our life is ! . . All the ills that flesh is heir to, how numerous they are ! What a strange power is the one to forget all this, and go on with our work, as if there were no immediate danger !

March 23rd.—Pontselly . . . Spent a week at the river side, catching some fish every day. But it was bitterly cold some days.

April 19th.—We were all as a family to-day at Carnarvon, at the *Sefydliad* (‘ Recognition ’) of my successor, Rev. Stanley Jones. I was chairman of the afternoon meeting. . . . a good meeting, and likely to do good to minister and wife. I came to it as a weak church of under 200 members, and my successor receives it as a church of over 450 members. My work has not been in vain ; and I am glad that it is to be carried on by a man spoken well of by all who know him. May the Lord bless and prosper him !—is my prayer.

We will leave the Diary, for a moment, to give this extract from his speech at the above meeting :

I know I was led here, and I believe now that I was led to Bangor too. I was for years a hard worker here, but lately I had become a poor visitor, and left most of it to my wife. . . . But if I was defective in visitation these latter years, I did my best in the pulpit to the last, thoroughly believing that Nonconformity must have power in the pulpit. . . . The first recognition service I ever

attended, a ruddy-cheeked lad, was that of Mr. Williams, Newcastle Emlyn, and the famous David Rees of Llanelly was delivering the charge, and I remember this story ever since : A traveller in some part of Wales, astonished to find the children and others so disorderly, asked a stone-breaker by the way-side, 'Is there no minister of the gospel to be found in these parts?' And the reply was : 'Yes, there is one in that hollow beneath ; but neither God nor the devil knows anything of him.' . . .

I have great love for this chapel, for the sake of those who have been my fellow-worshippers here. I can say of it as the saintly Samuel Martin said to me of Westminster Chapel—'It is like a child to me !' I gave the best twenty-eight years of my life to the service of Christ and His people in this place—in great joy often, in tears sometimes, in anxiety always, asking 'Oh, what shall the harvest be?'

He had a story to tell at the expense of his pastoral art. He was one day walking down a street in Carnarvon when he saw a young woman on the other side looking at him with some interest. Being in a pastoral mood, he crossed over, and taking her to be one of the members of the church greeted her kindly, and made the usual inquiries about things at home, &c. The more he asked the more puzzled she seemed, and the more hesitating her answers. He understood it all upon discovering that she was the new servant in his own house. No

one enjoyed more than himself the telling of the story of 'I am your Jane, sir!'

We revert to the Diary:

May 18th.—I left home for Liverpool to preach at Tabernacle Saturday week, then to London, and on Saturday to Sowerby for Sunday, and home to-day. I spoke twice in London,¹ and am very tired. I am thankful, very, for the strength given me. I am too apt to complain that I am getting old. Mr. Chamberlain is my age, and he seems to begin his career now—at least he is full of energy. The right way is to go on as long as I can, trusting God, and serving him to the end.

June 14th.—Preached twice at Aberavon. It was awfully hot and oppressive. Returned weary and tired and could not walk up to the Rofft from the station. I certainly overdid it. . . . I did my best, and believe I did good.

July 5th.—I was at Manchester preaching, on my 60th birthday. I feel very thankful to my Heavenly Father for upholding me so long. May He make me alive to the fact—

Mwy sydd eisoes wedi ei dreulio

Nag sy'n ol o'r anial dir!

(More has been already travelled

Than remaineth of the road.)

July 25th.—Came home to night from Ordination at Pentrych. I have been three weeks from home and

¹ In connection with the Colonial Missionary Society.

preached ten times, and on great occasions—especially at the *Undeb* [Welsh Union meetings] at Bridgend. I thank God for His strength.

In August he was at Newcastle Emlyn—revisiting, for the last time, the scenes of childhood—

To look on Nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes
The still sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh, nor grating, tho' of ample power
To chasten and subdue.

He presided at the local Eisteddfod held (August 13) in his native town, deeming it, he remarked, a greater honour to be a president there than to have been a president at the National Eisteddfod a few weeks previously. He dwelt on the Eisteddfod as offering some reward for work done, and much encouragement and example for work to be still better done. 'Let us take as our mottoes the words on the two sides of John Hampden's banner, in one of this country's battles of liberty: "God with us," and "Not a step backward!"'

In connection with this last visit there are two 'Monthly Notes' charmingly revealing the survival in him of the child.

RE-OPENING OLD WELLS

I lately visited the churchyard at Capel Iwan, where my grandparents, my parents, my aunt Rachel, and other loved ones sleep, and among them the eloquent Williams of Newcastle. And that summer afternoon I opened the old wells in my affection and my heart which had been to some extent stopped. I felt then, and many a time since, that God has not intended old affections to be stopped as the Philistines did of yore with Abraham's wells. They should be re-opened now and again that their living waters might flow fresh and free. O what memories came to me, while meditating, on the spot where my beloved lay ! When the longing for them has become painfully keen, I have endeavoured to forget the grave, and think of heaven. But there comes a season later when there is a sombre enjoyment in visiting the family Machpelah, and musing among the tombs. Our separation is *further*—behind, our reunion *nearer*—forward. . . . It did my heart good to open the old wells by walking miles along the banks of Cuch to Capel Iwan. And as we returned past the Glaspant I was a new man and different from what I was in starting from Pontselly.

ANOTHER OLD WELL

About the same time I visited Aberporth, the first time for over twenty years. There I had my very earliest glimpse of the sea, and I felt like that old lady, from inland, who when she saw the same sight for the first time cried—‘Well, thank goodness, here is something at last, and plenty of it !’

It was a similar feeling that made the poet sing—

Salvation like a boundless sea
Keeps swelling on the shore.¹

There is an unebbing fulness of God's best things—the things all need.

The only annual holiday I remember as a boy was a day at Aberporth. The start from home was made at 6 o'clock in the morning, and everyone bathed in the sea that day : the only thorough cleansing many a one had in the year's length ! It was a pleasant day altogether, singing on the way going, and singing louder still returning after bathing twice or thrice. . . . After reaching Aberporth this time, I felt I must look for my name in the rock, seen many a time since I had cut it with my knife over forty years ago. The tide hindered my seeing it, but it is there written in the rock for ever. It will be there when the hand that carved it will be a 'withered hand.' Is it not incredible that the work of a man's hand shall outlast the man himself? that the book will outlive its writer? No, no, this is not true. The rock shall be worn, but the sculptor shall remain ! The leaves shall be scattered, but the writer shall be !—Thoughts like these filled my mind that splendid day at Aberporth. There I saw the first storm ; and from there my mother walked seven miles home at night, offended with Cardiganshire after hearing of its having elected a Tory for Parliament. Blessed be the memory of my mother's righteous wrath !

¹ The story of this verse may be seen in the writer's *Sweet Singers of Wales*, p. 36.

September 19th.—I travelled to-day to Wotton-under-Edge and slept at night in Rowland Hill's bedroom. He lived here for forty years, and has left his mark in the district. He left his money to help poor widows, but none to help ministers. He had his reasons, I have no doubt, but did not reveal them. Mr. Williams, his successor, said that I had the largest congregation since Spurgeon was there forty years ago. I did my best, and do not intend going so far again. Very long journeys tire me more and more.

October 3rd.—I have just had the pleasure of sending six cheques of 2*l.* each to six brethren, that will cheer them much to-morrow (Sunday). I hope they'll preach better. More power to them !

9th.—I went on the most stormy day I ever remember to a meeting at Llanrwst. I had not been there for many years. . . . The storm on the way to chapel at 2 was awful, and wetted me badly. I preached powerfully—God is good ! The railway was broken up by the storm and I had to ride in a coach to Talycafn, and in a special train home from Llandudno Junction. What strange experiences one meets with !

12th.—Again I am troubled with a serious boil. . . . I travelled in pain on Saturday to Brighouse through a terrific storm of lightning and thunder. Many were killed ; I was saved. Lost my train at Manchester and only reached my destination after 9 P.M. On Monday morning, I heard that Archbishop Benson died at Hawarden the day before. I grumbled much because of the hardships of my journey : but when I learnt of

this death, how it calmed me ! How I thought of what might have been ! Although not well when I came home how glad I was to be able to come home at all ! The Archbishop had been overdoing it in Ireland—and to-day all the papers say he was not a great man, not a great scholar, not even a great ecclesiastic ! And now the one question is—Who is to succeed him ? What a sorry thing is position, office, popularity !

25th.—I was to be in Cavendish Chapel to-day, but had to send Prof. Davies, because of my bad cold. It was against my will. I hate cancelling an engagement, but we all have to do it.

I have read a remarkable book of which I had never heard—‘Annals of the Parish,’ by John Galt. Mr. Cayenne (a suitable name) I had met, and knew well.

The date of the following letter gives it a place before the next diary entry, written to Mrs. Richard Davies (Treborth) on the death of her husband, M.P. for Anglesea :

Bala-Bangor Independent College, Bangor :
October 29, 1896.

Dear Mrs. Richard Davies,—Allow me to join with your many many friends in tendering my sympathy to you and your family in your great bereavement. You are not left without true consolations. . . . You helped your dear Husband to live a noble life of eminent usefulness. He was truly a good man and lived to do good in many ways. I shall never forget his kindness, especially when he took me through the House of Commons once, when

my health had broken down and I did not wish anyone to remind me of it. He was so gentle and sympathetic, yes and cheerful. Years afterwards he told me that he thought then my work was over.

Your home faces another Home : if he has gone out from one he has gone in to the eternal Home, so that you know where to find him again. Others eminent in usefulness and piety have gone home from Treborth. There is only one Healer in a sorrow like yours, and He is your Father's God. May He be now your Consoler, and the Father of the fatherless in your home !—is the sincere prayer of Mrs. Evans and myself.

30th.—This last week has been most unfortunate for me : owing to a bad cold I have had to break three promises. . . . It grieves me much to fail to be at Holywell on Sunday. I have failed to go there three times successively. . . . How difficult it is to believe that all this is for the best !

November 4th.—Liz married to-day to Mr. O. L. Roberts. . . . The preparation was an anxious time, and the house seems quiet and queer without her. I'll miss her I know, but I think it was the path of duty.

10th.—Received a long letter giving ——'s last struggle. His life would make a novel. Could I write it ? It would be interesting and full of lessons. Think of it !

11th.—I planted two plum-trees to-day in the Rofft garden, that were to have been here the day of Lizzie's wedding. If I remember, they were the first two trees I ever planted. Will they grow, I wonder ? If they do,

they'll bear fruit in another man's garden. Shall we, I wonder, eat of their fruit? If so, I'll be satisfied and thankful.

December 5th.—It is Sunday to-morrow and I am to be at home. Dr. Morris, Brecon, was buried on Tuesday: died at the tea-table.¹ How alarmingly sudden some pass away, and what a sermon it is for all of us! How we force away the thought of it! May I use to-morrow as a quiet thoughtful day!

13th.—Preached at Queen Street, Chester, and had a good day, especially at night, when the chapel was crowded; and for the first time preached the 'Staves' [Ex. xxv. 15] in English. It is to me a great drudgery to get up a new English sermon, but most pleasant when over, and like this night well over. . . far above ordinary. It tired me much. Thank the Lord for His strength!

'*Well over*' —yes, the last sermon on earth; 'tired' with preaching, not tired of it!

The following Thursday evening² he was preparing the 'Monthly Notes' which appeared in the January *Dysgedydd*. One of them was frequently quoted at the time of his death, as though it had been a weird presentiment.

He catches himself listening intently to the

¹ See *ante*, pp. 82-3.

² The date is supplied by the reference to the earthquake (December 17).

clock of St. James's Church striking the half-hour, and writes :—

‘Why do I hear it so bell-like to-night? It has struck hundreds of times since I have been in this study without my noticing it at all! But I was compelled to listen to it to-day; what can it mean? The year is wearing to its close, and has almost reached the shortest day. No, hark! it strikes again, three times now, and it says distinctly: Read-y—read-y—read-y! I understood at once that it was this morning's earthquake which had aroused my whole nature. I feel that we are all in the hand of the great God. . . . There it strikes again, and I cannot help reading words into its strokes: In—Thy—great—hand—all—my—time—is! How true, if we but pause to think! . . . Yes, all ‘my times are in His hand.’ There, the clock strikes again. A quarter of an hour is for ever gone! Does it not make wonderful haste? And is that not a solemn sentiment on the dial at Oxford? ‘The hours perish, and are set in the great account to meet us!’ What wonder that Bradford, the martyr, should have remarked when he heard the clock strike: ‘There, I have another hour for which I must give an account!’ . . . The clock strikes again. I have done nothing the last quarter of an hour; but that does not make the clock stop; it ever goes and never stops, and every hour is a talent of time, and we must give an account of it at the last. Does not this make life very solemn? . . . Hark! the clock of St. James's strikes again: ‘Thou—shalt—not—boast!’ It is easy to make out the warning: to-day is my best friend. Make the best of

to-day, fill every hour with the best possible, in thought, prayer, and deed ; and the year will be to thee a happy year whatever may happen before the end.

The last sentence in the last of those ' Monthly Notes ' is—' Give Joy.' In it he returns to ' Margaret Ogilvy ' and refers to the scene of the boy standing on his head in his mother's bed, trying to brighten her, broken-hearted with sorrow as she was, asking—' Are you laughing, mother ? ' He adds several little everyday incidents of ' giving joy ' : the brother remembering the sister who had helped him to go to college—the son in the town sending his mother in the country a shawl, ' not worn by her till he comes home for a Sunday's visit '—and lastly, to young men calling to consult him about the best 1*l.*'s worth of books, which they wished to present their minister with, and their joy as they left his house to go and buy them. ' All through this new year let the spirit descend upon our readers—

Give joy ! '

During these months he had been carrying in his soul the sense of a tryst with death. Returning in early autumn from preaching at Capel Mawr, Anglesey, he told a friend that the Rev. William Ambrose had died when the realisation of an insurance policy was due ; and he said that he had often felt lately that it might happen so with

him. He was in no sense gloomy, but like one on the watch. His usual mood was one of chastened brightness. Referring to some conversation he had with him in September, Principal Simon wrote at his death : ' I little thought it was to be our last meeting. Cheerful and full of plans as he was then for the benefit of the College, it seemed as though many years of still higher usefulness than ever were in store for him.'

The present writer saw him last at Bala, Nov. 25-26. It was after the service that evening Principal Edwards broke down in speaking to him—' I am shunted : but as for you, you go on ! ' ' But it is possible to overdo it,' urged Dr. Evans. And still the other repeated—' You go on : you have your work to do, and you must do it ! ' In the house afterwards he referred more than once to this. But on the whole, his spirit was bright and happy that evening. Indeed, looking back upon it, it appears as an ideal last evening for our memory of him. The light that shines from it is the light of a tranquil eve : in the higher reaches of the sky a grey cloud or two, but around the westering sun white clouds changing to mystic gold.

The story of the last few days shall be told by the only one that could have done so :

The last Sunday that he was able to go out was December 20. He attended the morning service in the

English Chapel, when S. R. Jenkins, M.A., preached a children's sermon. In coming out he turned to 'S. R.,' and said, pointing to himself—'You have done one little boy good this morning.' In walking up through the garden to the house, looking around he said, 'The *lili wen fach*'—(his name for snowdrop)—'will be out very soon.' On Wednesday morning he called for me to get ready at once to go out with him. We started, first to Upper Bangor, and then down to the city: he walked down the hill very well, appearing as usual; but on our way back, as we neared the house he felt tired, and stopped once or twice to look around. When we reached the Rofft gate, he was exhausted; but we put it down to his wearing a heavy overcoat. Next morning he was very cheerful and appeared as usual, expecting Lizzie home for Christmas; and busy at work in his study, finishing the article he had promised for Dr. John Thomas's biography, and also the short memoir of Rev. David Rees of Llanelly. He had told me the day before that he wanted to finish both before Christmas Day. That Christmas eve he remained in the study until 9 o'clock, then came down and called us together as a family for prayers. He prayed longer than usual, and very earnest, and appeared unwilling to end.

He woke, some two hours after midnight, feeling poorly: but after walking about in his room he improved, and slumbered until morning. He remained in bed, but there was no anxiety till the afternoon. A doctor was called in, and that night

he rested fairly. Next afternoon he seemed worse, and his own doctor from Carnarvon was wired for. He came and examined him, his patient asking him in his old way 'Are you going to pull me through?' The news was broken to his wife that he was in great danger. To their great joy, however, on Sunday morning he felt a little better; but it proved delusive; and next morning a specialist and his brother, Rev. Justin Evans, were telegraphed for. Once again he was his old self, telling the specialist, 'Now for the verdict: I have been waiting patiently.' The reply was—'I believe you have turned the corner, and that I shall hear you preach again!' 'Do you really?' was the persistent query. The specialist repeated the same words to his wife, adding however that there was grave danger.

That night he was very ill; his brother arrived about four in the morning but could not see him till 9 o'clock, as he was then too exhausted.

Justin remarked after coming to the room: 'I have come to the end of a long journey.' He replied, 'I also have come near the end of a long journey!' In a short time he called out 'Mamma, are you there?' 'Yes, I am here always,' I replied. 'And you will be *to the end*.'

Next afternoon, when we as a family stood beside his bed, Mr. O. L. Roberts remarked 'You will be in Liverpool at the Recognition?' 'No,' he replied, looking at

Justin, 'another will take my place there.' After another effort to speak, he said, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course.'

That evening, between 10 and 11, he made a sign as though he wished to be lifted a little. They helped him, and he appeared all at once so much better that his wife said 'Herber, you are much better.' He looked at her, and lay back gently on the pillow, and passed into peace, without struggle or groan: but upon his face was a smile that lingered for hours afterwards. 'Not night—not night!'—December 30, 1896.

Although the report of his illness had been given from day to day, causing much concern, yet no one had expected the end. Wales was shaken as though one of its mountains had been dislodged. This letter from Principal Edwards, dated December 30, found him not in the morning when it came:

I was very much concerned when I heard this morning that you were ill. I hope it is but a passing ailment.

I was extremely thankful to you for the telling address which you gave the students, and for the still more powerful sermon which I heard from you the next evening [November 25-6].

So the two parted as in a mist, with a letter lost between them—two men of whom any nation might

be proud—re-joined now and together beholding the unveiled Face.

January 4, 1897, he was buried in Glanadda Cemetery, Bangor. There was no difference that day—political, social, or denominational : all joined to honour the dead. The Rev. W. J. Woods, B.A., spoke as representative of the Congregational Union, the Rev. Griffith Ellis, M.A., as Moderator of the Calvinistic Methodists' Association, Dr. David Roberts—last of his great comrades of an earlier day—and Mr. Lloyd George, M.P. In the evening the Rev. Dr. Owen Evans preached a memorial sermon in Welsh, and Rev. William Pierce in English. Indeed, that vast concourse were all preachers that day—preaching over again to one another sermons they had heard from him. And they sang, too, that bleak winter's day, in the shadow of great mountains,—sang the hymn he had repeated in the field near Buxton, how the 'windings of the way' appear from 'the high hills of Salem.' And they sang his own hymn

'Keep me very near to Jesus'

—sang it for themselves : for where he was, it was not mere hope of light at eventide, but the light itself, with never an eventide to its radiance.

So passed into the ampler air and sunshine a generous spirit: one not unacquainted with the thorns of the desert or with the wayward motions of the human heart ;—tried as much by the morning brilliance as by the darkness at noon, but neither overcome by the one nor seduced by the other ;—a spirit redolent of Nature, and adorned of Grace ; making constantly for the essential light, with fear often, with hope always ;—and now arrived : finding his sphere, if haply such there may be, among the Chrysostoms of the ages ; or, perchance, if a human face and brotherly may have some benignant ministry to fulfil at one of the twelve shining gates, to welcome and to help those much beaten by wind and rain, will not he be seen, Sandalphon-wise, very near the gate ?

DATE DUE

DEMCO 38-297

Duke University Libraries



D00242285N

Div. S. 285.8092 E92 L674 1900

Lewis

Herber Evans

**DUKE UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY**



**DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA
27706**

[Faint, illegible handwritten text]

Duke-LSC



D00242285N